Trail of the Age Walker

Story: Trail of the Age Walker
Storylink: https://www.fanfiction.net/s/5242267/1/
Category: Golden Sun
Genre: Adventure/Drama
Author: Jupiter'Cobalt
Authorlink: https://www.fanfiction.net/u/2017028/
Last updated: 07/05/2010
Words: 33137
Rating: T
Status: In Progress
Content: Chapter 1 to 8 of 8 chapters
Source: FanFiction.net

Summary: The sealing of Alchemy brought about the eroding of the world, but one year after the lighthouses have been lit, an eerie man walks the trails of Weyard...

Chapter 1: Prologue: Legend Of The Sealing

[Author's Note: I'm not a huge fan of long Author's Notes. So I'll try and keep this as short as possible.

Firstly, this fic is *old,* and the update times are incredibly sporadic. If you decide to follow this, be prepared for a long wait. I hope that doesn't dissuade you in you decide you like it. But it has to be said; *months* go by between chapters. But I do intend to finish it. Eventually. So climb on board.

Second, there are a few reviews for this that are VERY outdated. When I started, I didn't think very far into the mechanics of writing; specifically, POV and conversation set ups. I was bad, to summarize. There were multiple errors that made reading this nearly impossible. I've fixed that. A fairly long time ago. As in, right after they were pointed out to me. There was a massive rewrite, and here we are today. Unless something else is going completely over my head, this is *much* better than it was back in 2009. If you see something that you can tell is either an obvious mistake or something you feel needs to be fixed, please; say so in the reviews or drop me a PM. These mistakes go completely unnoticed if nobody points them out to me. I appreciate it.

Now, with these things said, please, enjoy your reading.]

Trail Of The Age Walker – Prologue

The lightning strikes...

The hollow ice...

To fell the man caught stealing,

The man does fall...

Sealing all,

A vessel comes revealing...

Long before the lighting of the lighthouses, Alchemy flooded the world with its power. Every man and woman in Weyard had control over an element, to some degree. Knowledge was not exclusive to well paid scholars, and every citizen of every nation knew the vast secrets that Alchemy possessed. There was peace, tranquility, and hope for people across the planet. The land was fertile, the food was plentiful, and the continents were all one, spanning the world and uniting its inhabitants.

Then, the kingdom of Calren, the most powerful nation on Angara east of the Goma Range, suddenly attacked the neighboring cities and villages. In less than one month, the entire eastern half of the continent fell to their might. War-like and oppressive, the Calren royal family greedily turned their attention towards the Golden Sun, the single most powerful source of Alchemic power in all of Weyard. The four most powerful adepts of the kingdoms leaders, each a master of their own element, gathered a small army and charged towards Vale, the village at the base of Mt. Aleph, which the Golden Sun resided over. Taking with them the youngest adept of the Calren family- a boy with control over each element- the band burned every village in their path, and killed every soldier who stood to defend Alchemy from them. When they at last arrived at Vale, they wiped out the entire town, save for the elders, who escaped into the peaks of Mt. Aleph. Upon reaching the mountains themselves, they realized what the elders had been doing; as the villagers

valiantly defended their home town, the elders used what little time they had to summon the guardians of the elements as a final defense.

The Star Magician, protector of Mercury's might.

The Demon Valukar, defender of Mar's fury.

The Sentinel, wielder of Jupiter's power.

And Dullahan, the guardian of Venus.

The four were the strongest force on all of Weyard, next to the gods themselves in strength, but with the tempting prize of Alchemy's power behind the demons, the five adepts fought them. For 24 days the battle raged, wounding the young boy brought with the four adepts and killing the Calren soldiers in the process, but in the end even the ancient god-appointed protectors of the Golden sun could not stop the continuous onslaught of the world's most powerful adepts. Then, as the five approached the Golden Sun again, they were confronted by a being called 'The Wise One.' The Wise One gave the five a final warning; turn back and repent, or a horrid fate would befall them and the world. But after the victory over the most fearsome foes that Weyard had to offer, the adepts brushed off the warning. All save for the youngest of the group. The boy, taking heed of The Wise One's warning, attempted to convince the rest of his covey to turn back, to return to Calren. But they did not listen, and instead called him a coward, a fool to give up such an opportunity. So the boy retreated alone, and when he reached a peak a fair distance away from Vale, he turned back in time to see a bright flash and a violent earthquake. In an instant, the Golden Sun and his siblings were gone.

This is the legend of the sealing of Alchemy, but it is seldom known in Weyard today. Few remnants of the Calren dynasty remain, and the boy of the tale simply disappeared. What his fate was, along with the fate of his brothers and sisters, remains unknown.

Chapter 2: Chapter 1: Sneak Attacks

Trail Of The Age Walker - Chapter One

Part One

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

A violent storm ravages Vale as the Golden Sun dimly glows during the night. Cracks of thunder shake homes as rain hits straw and wood rooftops. The village of Vale had been completely rebuilt after Mt. Aleph crumbled down, destroying it as the Golden sun rose. Newer, larger, and notably safer, the population had increased substantially with an influx of scholars coming to study the release point of Alchemy. No breakthroughs had rattled the foundation of Weyard as of yet, but progress had been made in that direction. Adepts from across the world gathered to hone their skills in whatever way possible, but with no real way to harness the raw power of the Golden Sun, many left disappointed. Some stayed, however, and they were welcomed with open arms by the townsfolk. So far, no one had come with negative intent. But nothing lasts forever…

'*Isaac, wake up!*'

Isaac jumped as a loud wave of thunder rippled across the sky. His room was empty, the only movements from the shadow of a tree by his window. He laid himself back down to bed.

'*Please, dear, wake up!*'

He jumped up again to the sight of an empty room. He stood up and walked over to the window. The curtains were open, and from the positioning of the house he could almost see the entire new Vale. The old style of buildings had been retained in the redesign of Vale, so it looked very similar, aside from the different layout. The wind blew rain into the window, and he closed the curtains. Walking downstairs, he noticed that he was alone in the house. As his mother and father had been helping the town rebuild the plaza the entire day, it was a safe guess that they were staying at the inn for the night, too tired to travel up the rocky stairs that led back up to the family house. At this thought he sighed. He really needed to get his own place someday, and the rebuild was most likely the best time to do it. He was 18 now, and it was time that he got out on his own. Of course, in a small town like Vale, you couldn't really move out, only next door. But still, it was likely better than having them breathing down his neck every day. They would probably like the new privacy as well, now that he thought about it. Not that he enjoyed thinking about it.

Another crack of thunder whipped through the village, and he grabbed his tunic from the coat rack by the door. It was an old possession of his, something that he has had almost as long as his scarf and it has had new pieces of cloth sewn on skillfully by Dora as he grew older, up until he left originally Vale to go on his journey. Today, while a slightly snugger fit, it still served him well on rainy days, and today was certainly a rainy day. Unable to sleep, he headed out, hoping that a walk would help clear his head. He had a location in the woods near town, a small clearing with enough space for a small campsite, which he used as a personal get away from the stress of the world when he returned to Vale from Prox. It had a small tent, but not much else. Seeing as Vale, along with fresh food and water, was a mere 10 minutes away, it seemed useless to leave an overly

large amount of supplies there. He jumped over the wooden gate, still only really capable of stopping a small child from wandering out, and headed into the nearby forest.

There was no trail, only inconspicuous markings so that he could, should he forget the way, find a path back. Things like small piles of rocks tipped over in a certain direction, sword cuts in trees, and even arrows in the dirt marked a twisting trail. The arrows, incidentally, pointed in the wrong direction, some even pointing up, to throw off anyone who may wander in looking for him. In truth, one could really simply go straight ahead from turning out of Vale's gate, but Isaac liked the feeling of going through the woods again. It had gotten too boring around Vale. Not to say that he enjoyed having his life threatened at every turn, but it gave him a way to keep on his feet, to train himself a little more every day.

When he turned past the final tree, the rain had begun to let up, and he took his tunic's hood off of his head. The Golden Sun was in plain view from there, still dimly glowing over Vale. With it on one side of the sky and the Moon on the other, it felt like he was standing at the intersection of two worlds foreign to him. It felt like when he, Garet, Jenna, and Kraden first ventured into Sol Sanctum. He leaned against a tree and stared off into the sky. Stars dotted the picturesque space in between the Golden Sun and the Moon, but among the feelings of nostalgia and peace, he felt something else. Something that suddenly appeared gave him a chill down his spine, and his eyes slowly scanned the tree line for movement. He was hoping it was just the wind, but something told him that there was something more sinister just beyond his sight.

He began to lean forward, thinking that maybe staying here wasn't such a good decision, but as he did a sharp-edged

katana pressed him back against the tree. His pulse increased and blood began to trickle down his neck. He was pinned against a wall with an attacker's blade at his throat, had no means to defend himself, and was at the mercy of a possible madman. Yes. This was definitely a good decision.

Part Two

Isaac tried to get his eyes to look at the figure that held his life in its hands, but could not angle his head without making the blade cut even deeper into his neck. The man holding the blade was breathing heavily, like he had just ran a great distance, and had completely covered himself in a pitch black hooded robe, but that was all Isaac could see from his current position. He had left the Sol blade behind, thinking that he wouldn't need it. He seemed to be wrong. With no weapon, he didn't have that many options. He could A: try to attack from here, likely getting his head sliced off in the process, B: surrender, or C: use psynergy to save himself. C seemed like the best choice.

'Spire!' At his thought a stone spire flew up from across the clearing and slammed into the cloaked man, sending him flying back into the forest. Isaac rolled across to open ground, and saw the man lying in the bushes motionless with the stone that sent him there off to the side. He stood there, watching him. After a minute had passed, and the man showed no signs of life, Isaac relaxed a bit. Another mistake, for as soon as he did the man shot like an arrow up out of the trees and bushes and into the sky, landing on the top of a thick branch. The cloak was floating off on the breeze.

The man was well protected under his cloak, wearing chain mail over his chest, gauntlets going over his hands which went halfway up to his elbows, steel-tipped boots, and another black garb under it all that covered his bare skin. He wore a white mask as well, shaped slightly like a deformed human skull. To the average person, he would be extremely intimidating. But to Isaac, he was just a man who caught him by surprise. And his incredible jumping ability added to the surprises. The man stood there, quietly watching Isaac from above. They had made eye contact, but neither moved nor acted in anyway.

Then the man's hand rose. Aimed towards the sky, he let out a yell and dozens, if not hundreds, of fireballs sprayed out and rained down towards where Isaac was standing.

'What?!' Isaac leapt to the left and ran as the orbs of fire hit the ground behind him. The grass was set on fire and covered the clearing's camp ground in a sheet of flame. When the torrent of fire ended, Isaac stopped and swung around to see the man. He hadn't moved, and his arm was still up in the air. Looking down at Isaac, he let his arm drop to his side and jumped down into the flames. The fire opened up around him, and there was a direct line of sight from one to the other.

The man drew his sword, "…Come…" He said in a distorted voice. "…And face the wrath of the gods…" Isaac took a step back. The man sounded like a demon. When he didn't move towards the man, he spoke again. "What's the matter…" He raised his left hand up to the sky once more. "Are you afraid of the dark?!" As soon as the words left his mouth, all the flames around him spread out in a shock-wave pattern, dissipating as they reached the tree line. The clearing was now pitching black, much darker than it was before. The only light came from the Golden Sun, off in the distance,

and it only gave enough light to show the night sky above forest. The rest was covered in shadow.

A malevolent cackle rang through Isaacs ears. A figure leaped across the opening over his head. Then another. Then another. Then the realization hit him. There was more than one foe in the forest.

Part Three

Jenna shot awake with a small yelp. 'What…What was that?' She thought. She looked around her empty room. '…There's nothing...There's nothing here…' She laid back down into her bed. 'I guess that I just imagined it, then…' As she closed her eyes, she heard a noise again. "Who's there?" She mumbled into the darkness. There was no answer, only the wind outside her room's window. "…" She got up from her bed, picked up the small teddy bear she had with her from childhood, and slowly walked over to the door.

It creaked as it opened bit by bit, letting her see out into the hallway. Looking one way then the other, she saw that no one was there. Turning back around, she accidentally dropped the bear and it landed in the hallway. Bending down to pick it up, she saw a pitch black figure shoot by across the hall. Jumping up, she let out a small cry but was silent after seeing that there was nothing near her. She grabbed the toy bear and tossed it onto her bed. Grabbing her staff, she went back out into the hallway and crept up against the wall. She passed by her parent's and Felix's rooms and got to the stairs before stopping. Looking down from the top of the staircase, she had full view of the first floor. She couldn't see anything, but was still nervous. Inching down one step at a time, she froze at the bottom.

Against the wall across the room was the shadow of a standing man where there was no one standing. Old fears of the dark filled Jenna's mind and she stared blankly at the shadow. It moved like it was breathing, and stood as though it were holding in its hand a book. Jenna was stunned.

After two minutes had passed, it moved. Out of the wall. Towards her. And on the head of the shadow opened two blood red eyes, staring her down from across the room. Jenna let out a scream so loud, it nearly knocked down the rafters.

Felix, fully dressed, jumped down the stairs and sliced at the figure, but it ducked off to the side and rolled into another wall. "Felix!" exclaimed Jenna. "How did you-" He stopped her.

"There's no time! Run, now!" She was taken back.

"What? Why? I can help you fight it, and-"

"No, just go wake mom and dad and leave, take them as far away as you can! Go!" Reluctantly, she left up to wake them. Turning back to face the shadow as it emerged from the floor, he said "Alright then, you little bastard…" He readied his sword. "Watch what happens when you mess with my family."

Part Four

Isaac's eyes darted about the forest clearing, searching for his foe. His foe found his first, and with a strong kick to the stomach, he was temporarily down on his knees. But the short time he was on the grounds was all the assailers needed, and he was struck across the clearing into a tree's

trunk with another blow. Staggering to his feet, he screamed "Where are you?!" into the night. His only reply was another cackling laugh as four pairs of eyes appeared across from him. One was blue, one was purple, and one was brown, and then he recognized the white eyes of his original attacker. Isaac kept yelling. "Are you to afraid to fight me one on one?" A quick chuckle came from his enemy.

"…On the contrary, friend…" A ball of fire flickered up within his palm, illuminating the forest once more and showing that he was alone. "We're the only ones here…"

He shot the flames toward Isaac, but the slow moving fire was easily dodged. But the first miss did not stop the attack, and a continuous stream of flames was chasing Isaac as he sprinted to get away. He didn't leave the clearing, though.

'If I stay in open ground,' he thought, 'Then I should be able to stand a chance…' As he ran a complete circle around the clearing, the flames suddenly stopped.

"…There…" The man said, sounding satisfied. "…Now we can have a nice talk…" Isaac stopped and looked around. His eyes opened wide. There was a solid ring of fire that surrounded him and trapped him within the clearing with his foe. "Now come, child…And join me in a…Fireside chat…"

Isaac scowled. "Who are you? Why are you doing this?" The man was silent, frustrating Isaac to raise his voice. "I said 'who are you!' Answer me!" The man raised his slumped head to make eye contact with him. Then he spoke.

"…I am the vessel…Servant of the gods…" He spun his gold trimmed katana in his hand. "If you seek true answers…Then follow your destiny to its end!" He charged towards Isaac, crying out "Now…Defend yourself!"

Isaac stood straight. '…Grand Gaia…' With his thought, the man was caught in a huge tear in the earth, and his figure slowly disappeared into the blinding light that the opening let out. Huge boulders flew up from inside the hole, and a scream was let loose from the victim they hit. As the power of the attack faded, the hole slowly closed itself back up, and the ground came back together to become solid again. The light from his attack was gone, but the fire's blaze still lit the ground where the attacker's body lay motionless. The fire around him burned and crackled as the man slowly rose to his feet. The force of the attack had heated all of the oxygen to a non-breathable temperature, and he was panting to try to catch his breath. The smoke from the fire choked them both, and gave the now kneeling man an even harder time breathing. He uttered out a single word.

"…Disperse…" And the flames shot outward into the thicker parts of the forest. Though it engulfed the rest of the woods, the smoke was now clearing out and he rose to his feet with steady breathing.

"…Now then…" He said, still speaking with a demon-like voice. "…Is that all you can muster…?" Isaac jumped back. "…Pity…" He picked up his sword from the ground. "…I had hoped…to have some fun with you…before you died…" He readied his blade, and began to charge. "Now…Hold still!!"

Part Five

Felix slashed at the shadow, missing by inches as it leapt across the room towards a window. It hit the ground and ran, but as Felix swiveled around he fired off a Ragnarok and it slammed into the beasts back. As it hit the wall, the book it was holding was tossed across to the other side of the

building. The shadow struggled as the huge blade of psynergy impaled it into the wall. Felix relaxed a bit and walked over to pick the book up. He stared with disbelief. It was the Tomegathericon, the book of black magic they had received in Kibombo. As the blade of energy dissipated, the shadow let out an exasperated sigh and faded away with it.

Jenna walked back down, fully dressed and with a light blade. "I can sense more of them." Felix looked up and showed her the book.

"It had this with it." She nodded.

"I saw it. What do you think that it wanted with it?"

"Not sure." He saw that their parents weren't with her. "Where are mom and dad?"

"You seemed to have it handled. I figured that it wasn't worth waking them."

He sighed. "…Right. You said that you can sense more of them?"

"Yeah…" She looked out the window. The rain was picking up again. "It's like…A burning in the back of my mind. It doesn't hurt but…" She paused. "It doesn't feel right, somehow…" Thunder cracked and shook the house. "…Let's go."

They rushed out the door and into the rain as Jenna led the way.

Part Six

Isaac jumped up to dodge the first swipe, but the man lunged forward as his feet touched the ground. Rolling aside, he sprinted across the clearing as the man shouted out

"Mad Blast!" An explosion erupted out of nowhere on the ground near Isaac, not close enough to hit him but the shockwave was enough to knock him a few feet away. "Come on! Fight me…" He jumped up and raised his sword. "Son of Sol!!"

"What did you call me?"

Isaac jumped back as he came down. The man regrouped from the miss and charged after him. Three swipes at Isaac all missed as he dodged from left to right, back flipping to give him some distance from his attacker. Isaac got on his knees and closed his eyes.

"…What is this…?" He closed in slowly. "Giving up already? We've barely started to play…"

'Quake Sphere!'

Isaac's eyes opened and the ground began to shake back and forth violently, throwing the man to his knees. The sudden quake caused him to drop his sword as well. As soon as this happened, Isaac jumped to his feet, running full speed towards the fallen blade. The ground slowed to a stop, and he dived for the man's katana. He got it.

"Take…" Isaac charged after the disorientated man, too confused to move. "THIS!!" With all his might, he shoved the blade into his chest. The man barely flinched. Their eyes made contact. Then Isaac saw it. The man's eyes were suddenly blue.

Part Seven

Felix and Jenna were racing through Vale, Felix following closely behind his sister. Jenna stopped.

"Did you feel that?" He stopped next to her.

"That quake?"

"Yeah. I think I felt a release of psynergy just before it. And-" She stopped.

"…What is it? Jenna?" She turned to him.

"I felt another shadow."

"Where is it?"

She pointed off into a forest outside of Vale. "That way, in the forest there."

"Are you sure?" She nodded. "Then let's go."

They immediately broke into a sprint towards the forest, and charged past the trees and bushes into the thickening woods. After running for a few minutes, they found something peculiar carved into a tree. Felix stopped to look at it.

"…Is that an arrow?" Jenna walked up next to him.

"It looks like it." There was a picture of an arrow engraved into the side of the tree's trunk, pointing off in a direction that seemed to lead out of the forest.

"Um…Should we follow it?" Felix asked.

"No. The shadow is off that way." She pointed off in the direction that the arrow pointed away from.

"Alright then, let's keep moving."

As they ran, Jenna thought to herself. 'This isn't good. The shadow isn't the only thing that I sense. I feel…' Her eyes opened wide. 'Isaac!'

Part Eight

As the man's eyes turned from white to blue, his body changed into a pitch black shadow and faded away with a soft breeze blowing through the woods. The katana didn't do any different, and dissolved into the wind shortly after. Then it was quiet. Aside from Isaac catching his breath, there were no more explosions, no more fires crackling, and no more swords swinging past him. He could rest, now. But as soon as he began to relax, he heard rustling in the bushes behind him. Swinging around, his fists glowed with Venus psynergy. Then he gave a sigh of relief. The two figures that emerged from the forest were that of Felix and Jenna, busting past the thick branches and leaves into the clearing with him.

"Isaac!" Jenna exclaimed.

"Good to see you, Jenna. Felix." They nodded at each other. Then Jenna said,

"This is going to sound weird, but…" She looked around at the burnt ground and ruined campsite before continuing. "You haven't seen any…Shadows around here, have you?" Isaac couldn't help but give a small laugh.

"Well, now that you mention it…"

Part Nine

On the top of a high hill off in the distance, a wounded man with blood trickling down his right arm stared off into a clearing in a forest near Vale. He clutched his wound. 'Damn kid…I haven't been wounded in battle for over a hundred years…' A red eyed shadow came up out of the ground behind him. "…Well?" the shadow gave a low hiss as a response. "…I see…" He looked over at Vale. 'So then the son of Sol is not the only one capable of defeating shadows, then…' He sighed, and turned to walk into the darkness. 'Troublesome…Very troublesome…'

Chapter 3: Chapter 2: The Beginning

Trail Of The Age Walker - Chapter Two

Part One

---

1 Hour after the Sealing of Alchemy;

He had been standing there for what seemed like an eternity, waiting and watching. He had hoped it was all a dream, or that it was in his imagination playing tricks on him. It wasn't. Vale was gone, and they were all gone along with it, caught in the bright light that dragged them away from him. He didn't cry. He didn't scream out in terror or in agony. He simply stood there, waiting. Hoping that maybe, just maybe, they'd come back...

Then he couldn't take it anymore. He started to run, as fast as he could, down the hill he stood atop, back towards where Vale once resided. Tears finally began to flow down his cheeks as he raced through a field of grass, crying out there names. Then he saw Mt. Aleph rise into view, mocking him with its mere existence, laughing at his loss. He stopped and raised his arm, aiming it at the stony surface of the mountain from almost half a mile away. He let out a scream and a solid beam of red hot energy shot from his palm, blasting into the side of Mt Aleph. He let the stream of energy continue until he could not maintain it any longer, and it faded as he fell to his knees, crying once more. He yelled into the distance,

"Don't leave me here! Don't leave me here all alone!" He hit the ground with his fist as hard as he could in his weakened

state.

"You bastard! "You took them away from me, you sick one-eyed freak! I'll kill you!" He screamed once more. "I'll kill you!" Just then, a huge explosion went off in front of him, knocking him back over thirty feet. He looked up at the source…

He shot up in his bed in a cold sweat. He looked around, and saw that he was back in Bilibin's inn.

"…Whew…" He sighed. He lay back down in his bed and stared at the ceiling. Thoughts were racing through his head about his dream. He got up and grabbed his mask and bag. '…I think I'll leave tonight…'

Part Two

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

"Isaac!" Jenna shouted as he rushed into Vale. "Wait up a sec! Isaac, wait!" He didn't stop though, for he wasn't about to let him get away. Not when he still had questions he wanted answers to, and not while that man was willing to attack innocent people like that. He ran into his house and up the stairs into his room. Grabbing the Sol blade, he was stopped by Felix as he turned around. "Hold on a minute, Isaac! Take a breath and-"

"There's no time for that!" He interrupted him. "As we speak he could be getting away!"

"I know that, but stop and think! There are more people involved here then just you, Isaac! And you should know

that you can't handle him on your own!" Isaac scoffed.

"I just beat him without a weapon, Felix."

"Not if what you told me is true. You said that it turned out to be a shadow you killed, like the one that Jenna and I fought before we came into the forest and found you. Think for a second, boy!" He was slightly shaking Isaac now. "If that man can summon demons that powerful like that, then how do you expect to beat him on your own, even with the Sol blade!" He looked at Isaac in the eyes. "You're going to need help and that's what Jenna is here for, that's what I am here for. This is why you have friends, Isaac, to have people give you aid when you need it the most. And speaking of friends..." He let go of Isaac, who was now calmed down enough to stop and listen. "We should probably wake Garet up. We're going to need him."

Isaac nodded. "Alright, but we can't just leave. Our parents, the mayor-"

"Leave that to me, just get your things together and bring Garet to the front gate. I'll tell Jenna to wait there for you." As Felix turned to go, Isaac stopped him.

"Wait a sec, what are you going to do exactly?" Felix smirked.

"In layman terms, I suppose you could call it 'making it someone else's problem.' See you in a few minutes." He rushed down the stairs and called out one last thing before Isaac heard the door close. "Don't be late!"

Isaac spent the next few minutes preparing supplies as fast as he could. He grabbed a small pouch and filled it with small support equipment; smoke bombs, herbs,- and packed a larger bag with food that his parents kept in a small box

near their bed. Looking over his gathered materials, he felt satisfied and headed for the door.

Part Three

The door of Bilibin's inn swung open as the wounded man quickly walked out into the rain. A young girl who worked at the inn called out to him:

"Wait, stop! You'll die if you go out with that gash on your arm!" He ignored her. He had gone through worse. The girls desperate please fell on deaf ears as he exited the town's borders. As he walked past the large wood barriers that surrounded the village, he thought to himself,

'Hmph. I preferred it when they were made of stone.' He put up his hood and headed north, the faint blue light he saw over the mountains his goal.

'Soon, my love...Soon we shall be together again...' A coughed violently and saw blood come out of his mouth. '... If I last the journey...'

He put that thought aside and continued on, focusing on better times to take his mind off the pain.

---

9 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

A young brown haired boy was staring off into the ocean. Watching the waves move back and forth, he stood there, high atop the Mercury Lighthouse, looking down into the Great Eastern Sea. The light of the beacon showered him in a haze of pure psynergy, and while it weakened his Mars abilities, his Mercury powers were greatly increased by its

presence. He loved how it felt, being so close a major power source.

His named was called by his instructor from the other side of the aerie. Turning around, his eyes opened wide as a huge wave of fire was shot at him. He smirked.

'Bout time...' He leaped over the flames by pushing himself off the ground with a pillar of water, landing safely on the other side. He drew his long sword at his master's command.

"Come!" More fire blazed around the leader's free hand. "Show me what you have learned!"

Part Four

"Garet! Garet, open up!" Isaac was shouting into Garet's home as he banged on the front door. "Garet, are you in there? Open the door, now!" The door slowly opened as Garet rubbed his eyes.

"You're lucky that the others don't live with me anymore. And do you have to yell? What time is it, has the sun even come up yet?"

Isaac ignored his complaining. "No time, pack your things, we're leaving!" Garet gave him a blank stare.

"Uh...What?"

"Get your gear, get dressed and let's go, now!"

"...Why...?"

"Just move!"

Garet reluctantly packed up his things, still with no idea as to why he was doing it. But he learned long ago that it was hard to argue with Isaac, so he picked up his sword, got dressed into his normal clothes and armor, and packed a bag of rations. He opened the door to find an impatiently pacing Isaac grabbing his shoulder and pulling him along until he got up and walked on his own to follow him.

"Come on, we have to hurry up."

"Isaac, not that I don't enjoy waking up at three in the morning to your wonderful voice as you smash down my front door, but *why* exactly did you nearly SMASH DOWN MY DOOR AT THREE IN THE MORNING?"

Isaac didn't stop to answer, only saying "We can explain on the way, just keep moving, got it?"

"Um, okay…" He thought for a second. "Wait, we? We who?"

He stopped when he saw Jenna waving at them from Vale's gate. "…Oh, this'll be fun…"

Felix was racing back down the stone stairs to join them after a few minutes. Garet was still being informed of the situation.

"Wait, let me get this straight…" He started. "So when you, Isaac, went for a walk in the woods for almost no reason at all at two o'clock in the morning, you got jumped by a man in a black cloak. And you…" He pointed at Jenna. "Found a 'shadow' in your house, that Felix then killed, and after that you rushed to Isaac's aid- Which it turned out he didn't need- By 'sensing' your way to him. That it?" Isaac and Jenna nodded in unison. "…Well, I've heard weirder. So, where's Felix at?"

"Right here." Felix ran up behind the three of them and stopped. "Are you all set to leave?"

"Yes, but what about our parents?" Jenna asked.

"Taken care of. I didn't want to wake them up, so I woke up Kraden instead." He smiled. "He said he'll tell them for us." The others didn't seem to care about the lack of being able to say goodbye.

"Well, hopefully," Isaac said, "We can take care of this and be back before too long. Everyone ready?"

"Yes!" Jenna answered, followed by Garet,

"I'm all set to go."

Felix nodded.

"Then let's move out!"

The four of them ran out into the grassy fields beyond Vale. Looking back as he ran Isaac saw that, finally, the sun was starting to rise over the mountains, meeting with the Golden Sun's glow and beginning to illuminate the village in soft yellow rays. It was dawn at last, and he was leaving the safety of Vale to go on a journey yet again. Hopefully, this time he would be back sooner.

Part Five

After limping through the rain for a handful of miles, he came upon one of the most well known land marks in all of Weyard, the mountain range that ran across the northern sections of Angara which was all that stood between the

central parts of the continent and a near never-ending winter of falling snow. He despised the cold, but he still returned to the land beyond it every year to pay respects, and to pray for the safety of the one he had loved those many years before. But this time was different. This time he did not come to pray. He had a journey to complete, and the cave that ran through these mountains was his start. He sighed.

'I hate the winter months…' He thought as he walked into the cave entrance that led to a small labyrinth of tunnels. At the end was a sudden change in the weather that would chill to the bone even the most prepared for such a trail.

But the weather was not his chief concern. He had a fountain of blood gushing from a gash in his right arm. And it was a well known fact that, recently, the cave he was stepping into gained a few new inhabitants that enjoyed the taste of their kin's flesh. He stopped walking as he heard soft breathing from the end of a dark section of the cave. He turned to look into the shadows, hand clutching his open wound.

The breathing stopped. After a moment of quiet, there erupted a blood curdling scream from the depths of the cave that seemed to come from every direction. But he knew better than to succumb to fear of being surrounded. He was *not* afraid of the dark. A red-skinned figure rushed madly out of the dark at him, with broken chain links hanging from sharp claws and pointed fangs dripping blood on the cave floor. He reacted immediately, letting go of his arm to grab his katana. While he was right handed, it would have to do. The beast stopped about twenty feet away from him to let out a scream that shook the tunnels ceiling.

This time, he was certain it came from every direction.

Part Six

Isaac, Felix, Jenna and Garet were rushing across the bridge that crossed the river that separated the land south of Vale from the hilly region that Vault resided in. Vault, a quiet little village that stood almost directly in the center of Angara, was the first stop on Isaac's original journey a year earlier. It was where he and Garet had met Ivan, where they gained new knowledge on psynergy's power, and where they took care of a band of thieves roaming the area. It held memories for him, but he couldn't stop to take in the feeling. If that man got away after attacking both him and his friends, then he'd never forgive himself.

As the group ran, Felix looked back at Jenna. "You can still sense those shadows, right Jenna?"

She looked up at him and nodded. "I don't feel any of them nearby, they're more off in that direction."

She pointed at the Goma Range to the east of Vault. It spilt the continent in two, and the only way through it was to either travel through a barren desert or to pass into a small cave. It had once been treacherous, but soldiers on constant guard and workers that built stable steps and ramps made passing through it much easier than it had been just a year before. Garet smirked and said "Good! Now I can teach them you can't mess with Vale and just walk away! Let's go!" He sped ahead of the rest of the group, but Felix was not so enthusiastic.

"Wait! Fool, if they entered Goma Cave, then-!"

Garet stopped running when he hopped over the stream that was next to the cave's entrance. He was staring in shock at the scene before him. When the others caught up,

they saw what Felix was trying to say. Scattered about the general area were the bodies of the guards of Goma cave, lying in bloody puddles with huge wounds on their bodies. The structures of stairs were destroyed, laying in ruin with scorch marks covering them. There was not a living soul remaining to tell them what had happened. But they needed no one to tell them, they knew who it was that did this, and they would not let it stand unpunished.

Isaac jumped up over the debris and made his way up to the mouth of the cave. The others were following close behind, but atop a tree just south of where the slaughter took place, a figure shrouded in a black haze looked down on them with shining blue eyes. It leapt down from its perch and followed them, casually walking in.

Part Seven

He found out why the locals were so afraid to venture into Bilibin Cave. He was being swarmed by four Cannibal Ghouls, dodging so often that he could barely get in a swing of his sword to counter them. He jumped back as one charged at him.

"Gah!" He landed and sheathed his blade. "Enough of this… No beast shall stand in my way!" He raised his good arm to aim it at two that stood close to each other. "Now, burn in the hell you deserve!" A bright orange-red orb glowed in his palm.

"Searing Beam!"

A blast of energy shot out from his hand, engulfing the two Ghouls in a stream of magma-hot psynergy, and they

vaporized in seconds. The other two were barely even phased, and charged at him from two directions. He grinned.

"Too easy." He jumped as they swung their claws at him, and in a quick motion he grabbed both of the chain links that they had on their wrists. Holding them both in his unharmed hand, his palm heated up to and extraordinarily high temperature, smelting the two broken ends of the chains together. After landing on the ground, he sprinted to the corner of the cave near the exit, dragging the stunned Ghouls by their chains to a stalagmite. Before the steel had a chance to cool, he wrapped the hot part of the chain around the tip of the spire, and added more pressure to fuse the objects together. He then jumped across the cave, and continued on without looking back.

Part Eight

Isaac took the lead. Goma Cave was practically unchanged on the inside, aside from the landslide that blocked their way on their first visit being gone. Despite the urgency of the situation, they had slowed to a quick walk, both from exhaustion and paranoia that around the next corner they would find another shadow reaching for their throats. Felix, who was right behind Isaac, broke the uneasy silence.

"Hm. Looks like they moved it."

Isaac looked back at him. "What do you mean?"

"The landslide that blocked the path. I was wondering if they had gotten rid of it during the renovations. Looks like they did."

Garet joined the talk. "That thing forced us to go all the way around to get through this damn cave when we first came here. What about you, Felix. When you came through here with Saturos and Menardi, did it give you much trouble?"

Felix replied with a simple, "No."

"How did you get by it? Did you go the same way we did?" Not looking back at him, he said,

"No, we just took the path." This threw Garet off.

"…Um, how? There was a landslide, so…"

Jenna interrupted. "What he's trying to tell you is that he didn't have to go around. He put it there in the first place." Garet looked back at her, then up at Felix.

"You…But…How did…?"

"All I did was use earthquake." Felix answered him. "The wall of that section of cave collapsed easily because it was unstable." They walked past where the landslide once was. "Still is."

Isaac climbed up the ladder to continue on the upper part of the path. "Enough of that, let's keep moving, shall we? Jenna," He looked over at her as Felix climbed up and past him. "What's wrong? You look uneasy." Garet looked back at her as he was halfway up the ladder. She said,

"I don't know…I feel like someone is watching us…" She looked back to the entrance.

"Is it a shadow?" Felix said, rushing back next to Isaac.

"No…Well, not the same one that I felt before, anyway… It feels, I don't know, just different, somehow." Isaac didn't say anything, but kept careful watch as Jenna came up the ladder. Garet helped her up, and started off toward the exit. "Come on, Isaac," Jenna tapped his shoulder. "Don't let it bother you. Forget I said anything."

He looked at her, and said, "…Right. Right, let's go."

They turned and headed up the stone stairs that led to the next part of the cave. A shadowy figure followed soon after.

They crossed the bridge that went over the small river running through Goma Cave, when Jenna stopped in her tracks and turned around. Isaac looked back and saw it. There, hiding in the darkness, was a pair of bright blue eyes looking back at them.

Part Nine

The man put his hood up as he exited the cave and turned to call out in a foreign tongue to the blue eyed shadow that he left behind in the cave. It nodded, and faded into the darkness. He was stepping into the snowy blizzard that marked the start of winter in Northern Angara. He had removed his mask which was now hanging from his belt by his side, still menacing even without a face behind it, but his identity was hidden by the shade that his hood provided when he looked down. He left deep footprints in the snow, and was walking against the force of the heavy wind. It seemed to turn with him, and was continually pushing against him as he walked. Even with his hood up, his expression could be seen as one of longing when he stared

off at the Mercury Lighthouse. With its bright blue beacon shining down on him, he thought,

'…My darling…I shall see you again soon…' He looked down to the ground as he walked, and cursed under his breath.

"…Damn it…" He was struggling in his walking. "Why do you interfere…?" The winds force grew stronger, and slowed him even more, causing him to have to use great force for each step. "…Do you mean to stop me…?" He was answered with only the howling of the wind. He shivered with step, but gave a small laugh. "Hah! You are a fool…I will not stop…Not until I see her again…And not you, nor the son of Sol, nor anyone else shall stand in my way!" He stopped and screamed to the heavens. "Do you hear me? You cannot stop me; you cannot stand in my way!"

He spat to the ground and pressed onward, receiving a mental message from a shadow that said the boy that he fought near Vale had passed into Goma Cave.

Part Ten

"Felix! Garet! Get back here, now!" Isaac drew his blade and charged the shadow, but it easily dodged his swipe. A column of flame shot at the creature as Garet shouted,

"Heat Wave!" The fire hit the ceiling of the cave, missing the shadow due to its slow speed of travel and the shadows high agility. "Tch! I missed?"

Felix ran up behind him and yelled, "Stone Spire!" Three spires then flew from behind the two of them, with one of them hitting the agile shadow in the arm. "These things are

fast, Garet, and you have to compensate for that, now come on!"

The Two joined Isaac in attempting to hit the creature, but with each swing of their swords and axes and with each bit of psynergy they threw at it, the beast either dodged completely or wasn't hurt by their attacks. Jenna was focusing her mind on her own attack, one that took her a few minutes to prepare for. She had only learned it just recently, and she still had trouble controlling it, but she felt that this was a good time to practice with its power.

She yelled out, "Alright! Move out of the way!" The three boys jumped away from the shadow, leaving it open to attack. Jenna screamed, "PYROCLASM!"

As she gave the command, a torrent of fire from four volcanoes of psynergy covered the shadow with a wave of flame. Isaac stepped up next to Jenna and listened as the magma engulfed the shadow. Jenna looked up at him, no longer needing to command the fire as it raged.

"What is it?" Isaac kept staring into the fire.

"I…I think I hear it screaming…"

The man stopped in the snow as the feeling hit him. Looking south, he felt a sudden emptiness in his body for a moment.

"…Hmph…"

He put his mask on over his face, and white filled his eyes. The feeling was gone, for the dead shadow had been replaced in his soul by another.

Part Eleven

He had been walking for almost half an hour longer than he had expected to, but he did not waver from his path. However, while his will to continue was still strong, his body was growing weak. The beacon of the Mercury Lighthouse was shining brightly down upon him, and while he knew that, due to his Mars power being the major source of his strength, he may have been weakened by its light he was stunned by how much of his power had been taken away from approaching the beacon. But with the village of Imil being in sight, faintly visible beyond the blizzard that clouded his vision, he was prepared to endure the cold for as long as it would take.

Or at least, he would try.

'…I…I can hardly breathe…' He was beginning to stumble as he walked. 'I won't…I can't stop here…' He was coughing up blood. 'Not…When I'm…So…' On this thought, he fell to his knees, staring blankly up to the Mercury Lighthouse.

"Ka…Kagami…" He collapsed, and his blood began to stain the snow.

Chapter 4: Chapter 3: The Grasp Of Shadows

Trail Of The Age Walker - Chapter Three

Part One

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

"You…You heard it screaming?" Garet asked as the group gathered around Goma Cave's exit. None of them were too wounded from the fight, but they were stopping a moment to catch their breath.

Felix added, "Hm. I didn't think that they could scream. The only noise that I've heard so far is a low hiss." Isaac was looking at where the shadow was standing before Jenna's Pyroclasm hit it.

"…What did it sound like?" Jenna asked him.

"It…It was like nothing I've ever heard before. Blood curdling and terrible…" He shivered a little. "Right…Well, let's get going. Jenna, do you sense any more of them?" She shook her head.

"No, that was the last one. I don't feel anything else right now."

'…Except for you…' She thought to herself.

"Damn…" Isaac said. "…Well, I suppose that we'll have to ask around Bilibin. I'm sure that Lord McCoy wouldn't mind if

we dropped in for a bit. Let's go, everyone." They headed out of the cave and onto the path that led into the town of Bilibin. The sun was now just above the mountains, basking the plains of Angara in a calm yellow aura.

They walked past the large wooden pillars that made up the walls surrounding the town, and saw that, already at this early hour, there were groups of people in the large central room of the village's inn.

"Well," said Felix. "That looks like a good place to start."

Part Two

Mia awoke suddenly in her bed. Looking out the window, she saw that the storm had only intensified while she slept. Now what seemed to be a fully fledged blizzard was storming around Imil. She got up, and thought to herself,

'I should go see if everyone is alright…' Grabbing her blue robe, she quickly dressed and headed out the door into the freezing weather.

As she left her house, she headed for the inn. She knocked on the buildings front door to be greeted by the woman who helped run it with her husband.

"Mia, what on earth are you doing out in this weather?" She said while rushing her inside. "Please come in, come in…" After closing out the freezing air, she turned to Mia. "You should try to stay indoors when a storm like this hits. But I'm sure you had your reasons." She smiled at her. "How can I help you today?" Mia looked around the inn's lobby, where only a few people were sitting at tables, the majority of them Imil residents who stayed out late drinking the night before.

"I'm going house to house to see if everyone is still alright. Or, I'm about too. I started here." The inn keeper smiled at her, and said,

"Well, that's very kind of you Mia, putting the safety of others before yourself. Everyone here is alright, as far as I can tell. I bet that by the time they all wake up to their hangovers the storm will be long gone."

Mia nodded. "I'm glad that everyone is alright." Looking out the window, she saw that the storm was lightening up. "Now seems like a good time to go check on the other houses. Have a nice day, ma'am!" Mia exited the inn and into the cold, but before she could turn her attention to the nearest home, her eyes caught something in her peripheral vision. Looking to see it more clearly, she stood, mouth gaping, at the sight just outside the village borders. A man, drenched in blood, was on his knees for a moment before crashing his face into the piles of snow that built up from the storm. She dropped what she was doing and ran to his aid. 'Oh, please, oh please, don't be dead, don't be dead…!'

Part Three

Isaac knocked on the strong wooden door. Hearing the running footsteps of someone on the other side, he backed up to give the opening door room. Once the door had creaked open, what he saw froze him in place. The one who opened the door was a teenage girl with a handful of tears running down her cheeks. She didn't look like she had been hurt, but instead like she was afraid.

"Wh…What happened?" Isaac asked her as the others in his group came up behind him. Between the sobs, she told him

a quick tale; late the night before, a man with a bandaged right arm checked in when she was the only one awake, saying that he needed rest for a journey to the north. After going up to his room, he quickly came back down less than an hour later, the covering on his arm removed and a huge bleeding wound was revealed through his black clothes. She had begged the man to wait for her to get him medical attention, but he rushed out the door as if he didn't hear a word she said. After that, she didn't know what to do, and began to cry, afraid for the man's safety but too afraid to go after him. When asked by Isaac about any more details on the man's appearance, she said,

"I couldn't see his face; he was wearing a white skull mask and a hood."

Felix, Jenna, Garet and Isaac's eyes all went wide as they looked at each other.

"We have to go, now, while we can still catch him." He patted the girl on the shoulder. "It's okay, it's okay, we're going to handle it. Get some sleep; you've had a rough night." The young girl nodded softly and watched as the four of them ran out the door.

Felix was running along next to Isaac. "She said he was resting for a 'journey to the north,' do you think that means he was headed for Imil?" Isaac didn't look back at him.

"…Yeah…And I know what else that means, too…" They ran over a bridge the trail to Bilibin cave went over.

'Mia…' He thought. 'I hope that you're alright…'

Part Four

His eyes opened wearily as he stared up at the ceiling.

'Where…Where am I?' He tried to turn his head, but he found it very difficult at first. 'What happened' He closed his eyes, but they shot back open in an instant. 'That's right! I collapsed in the snow, but if that is so…' He inched his head up. 'Then where am I now…?'

He saw that he was lying in a bed, on what seemed to be the second floor of a rather large building. There was more in the room, but what intrigued him the most was the girl sleeping in a chair by his bedside.

'Who is that? How did I get here?' He could hardly move, but he saw that his right arm was re-bandaged. '…I must have lost a lot of blood…' He looked back at the girl again. She was hunched over with her head in her arms, which were resting on her legs. The window let sunlight through to hit her at what seemed to be the perfect angle; she was glowing in the yellow light. 'I must have been out for a long time if the snow storm has cleared up…' He stared at the blue haired girl by his side. 'Did…Did she save me?'

He couldn't move, talk, or keep his eyes open for very long, but then it hit him. '…Wait!!' His eyes darted around the room. 'Where is my equipment, my sword, my bag, my mask? Where did-!' He stopped as he saw it scattered across the floor to the right of the bed, as though it had been tossed carelessly to the side.

'…' He relaxed. 'That was close…Without the orb…' Just then the girl moaned softly.

'What?'

She slowly lifted her head up, but she was not looking directly at him. She had teal eyes and a very lightly colored

skin tone, with a few golden add-ons to her light blue robes. In her hair, which seemed like it could go all the way to the back of her knees if let loose, was a white ribbon holding it in a rather attractive way. Her bangs fell in front of her face the way she was leaning, but it didn't block her view of him for long. They made eye contact, and her mouth opened a little with astonishment.

"You're…You're awake…!"

Part Five

Isaac, Felix, Jenna and Garet all arrived at the same time at the entrance to Bilibin Cave. Jenna walked up in front of the group, and, by what seemed to be instinct, she closed her eyes and began to focus on the inside of the cave, trying to sense any shadows that might be lingering inside. She found one, deep within.

Isaac asked, "Well?"

Jenna turned to him and nodded. "On the other side of the cave, waiting for us."

The group readied their weapons.

"Alright, then. Let's be prepared this time." They sprinted into the cave's entrance, fully ready for any surprise attack from the shade in an unlit corner or an ambush from the ceiling. But for most of their run through the cave, they saw no forms of life, human, monster or shadow. The team slowed to a nervous walk, checking corners, until…

Felix stopped. "…Are those…"

Around the next corner, two Cannibal Ghouls were unconscious and chained to a stalagmite. Or rather, their chains were smelted to it.

Garet spoke up. "How did…How did that happen?" But they did not have time to ponder this sight, for as soon as the words left Garet's mouth, a loud raspy scream came from deeper within the cave. Strangely, no one but Isaac reacted, and as he charged off further into the tunnel, Felix and Garet didn't follow until they heard echo's of swords clashing. Jenna's delay was shorter, but only because of a sudden burning in her mind. The thought shot into her head as she processed what had happened.

She took off after him. 'A shadow…'

Part Six

They just stared at each other, Mia at him with astonishment, the man at her with a stoic expression. Thought ran through both minds, however, as he didn't know where he was, and she had no idea as to his identity. Mia soon felt the effects of an awkward silence and spoke.

"I…I am Mia. Allow me to welcome you to Imil, albeit I wish that it could have been under better circumstances…" The man showed no change in expression, but continued to meet her eyes. "Um…Would you tell me your name?" The man raised an eyebrow, as though he had been spoken to in a foreign language.

"…I…My name is…"

He began to answer her, but stopped mid-sentence.

"..."

He looked at her slightly differently, still expressionless but with a look in his eyes that gave a hint of longing. Then Mia noticed that his eyes, which had been engulfed so brightly by white when he was unconscious that his pupils seemed to vanish in them, were now a light blue-green.

"My name is not important. I must go as soon as possible." He attempted to get out of the bed but still had trouble moving much more than a few inches. Mia shook her head and put her hand on his shoulder, holding him back down.

"You're not going to be moving much like this. I nearly ran out of psynergy, I used ply so much on you. It'll be at least a week before you can move properly again."

"I don't need to move...properly..." He forced himself up and had his legs over the side of the mattress. "I just need to move...And..." He stopped, thinking over what she said to him. "Wait...Did you say...psynergy?"

"Hm?" She looked at him strangely for a moment, but then realized what she was being asked. "Oh! Yes, I did. You see, there are certain people in Weyard that can control the elements, using a power called psynergy. Ply is one of those powers, one that only those in the Mercury clan posses." He looked up at her. "And you used it...To heal my wound... Correct?" Mia nodded. "Yes, I did. It look many tries before the bleeding stopped, the gash was so large. It was unusual; I've only seen a few others like it."

She thought to herself, 'And they were all from psynergy wounds, too...'

The man looked out the window as she spoke. "Psynergy..." He sighed. "What a cursed power..." Mia tilted her head a

bit.

"What do you mean? Did you already know a bit about psynergy?"

'Hmm…' She thought. 'I suppose that the Golden Sun rising would have spread knowledge of Alchemy to more people.'

"Know of it?" He scoffed and reached out his hand. "I have more control over it that any man alive." His katana, which was lying on the floor several feet away, instantly rose from the ground. Mia stared at it, and then she saw it. Holding the blade up in the air was the faded image of a white hand. The man was using Lift.

"Now if you'll excuse me," he said to her as he rose from the bed, using the katana as a way to help distribute his weight. "I have a very important errand in the Mercury Lighthouse."

Part Seven

Isaac rolled to one side to dodge an ice missile and cast three spires as retaliation. The blue-eyed shadow that Isaac was fighting stood imposingly at the other side of the tunnel, casting multiple Mercury attacks his way. Isaac was suddenly regretting his choice to run ahead and fight it himself. His spire attacks landed, but did minute damage to his foe. He drew his sword as a flare storm rushed by and caught the shadow in its fire. Isaac looked back…

"Jenna!" He called out, as she ran up next to him, sword drawn as well. "Glad you came."

She smiled. "Couldn't let you have all the fun, now could I? Now…" She used her free hand to prepare another Mars

attack. "Let's take him down!"

The flames from her initial attack dissipated and the shadow stood up, nearly unharmed from what would burn an average man alive. But the shadow was not an average man; it was something more powerful, more sinister. Conventional attacks wouldn't cut it. Isaac leapt into the air.

'Flint!' He came crashing down and with the full force of his blade, now wrapped in Venus psynergy from the Djinni Flint, he sliced at the shadow, smashing it into the cave floor and sending it flying into the wall as it bounced back up. Isaac looked back at Jenna, who then nodded. He ran to one side of the cave, safely behind a large ice pillar, and waited. He didn't wait long.

"Dragon Fume!!" Jenna cried as she let out a huge flame serpent that flew across the cavern. The shadow, not noticing it, staggered to its feet. Then it looked up, and Isaac, from his vantage point, saw as the shadow displayed what looked like an expression on its faded face; an expression of fear. The shadow's eyes opened wide as the serpent grabbed it in its jaw, and slammed it into the cave's wall. The Dragon Fume was exceptionally long, and the tail of the beast didn't come into the wall to end the attack for nearly half of a minute.

As the fume disappeared, Felix and Garet ran up behind Isaac and Jenna as they slowly walked up to the shadow, pinned to the wall. It fell to its knees, and the four readied their weapons. But before they could use them, the shadow began to fade away, and made eye contact with Isaac, standing in the center of the group of Adepts. It stared at him for as long as it was still in one piece, and as its head finally began to dissolve, Isaac's eyes shot open and he fell backwards.

Jenna helped him up, asking, "Isaac! What's the matter, what happened?" The group looked at him as he uttered with sincere fear in his voice,

"Th…That shadow…Said my name…!"

Part Eight

The man, while gathering his things despite Mia's statements that he should remain in bed, suddenly fell to his knees and screamed out in pain.

"GAAAAAH!! What is this!?" He screamed out to himself. "Who has interfered with my power!?" His voice changed and his eyes glowed bright white and he stumbled across the ground as he rose, landing his arm on the wall for balance. Then Mia, rushing to his side to give him aid, stepped back in shock. Now standing next to the man was a large shadowy figure, jet black and with a pair of blood-red eyes. It looked at her and let out a long hiss as she tripped and fell to the ground. "Forget about her. What happened," the man said to it. "Why have my Mercury powers vanished!?"

The shadow-beast turned to the man and let out another hiss, as some form of communication. Mia couldn't understand, but whatever was said enraged the man and he slammed his fist into the wall.

"Those four…Again they compromise me…" He looked at Mia then at the shadow.

"…" He snapped his fingers. The shadow bowed, and then walked into the man's body, disappearing as they made contact.

"…I must go…" He grabbed the cloak that Mia tossed to the side when carrying him in, and latched two hooks on its inside onto his chainmail links. Then, grabbing a small bag which he had with him, he tied a small string that was on it around the loop of his belt. Then he picked up the final item that he had not reclaimed; a white skull mask, covered with scars from sword slashes that, had he not been wearing the mask when he received them, would have cut open his face. He put it on, and turned to look at Mia one last time, eyes back to a light blue-green, before saying,

"I will be at the aerie of the Mercury Lighthouse. You are…" He coughed. "…For giving me aid, you are welcome to join us there. All questions you may have shall be gladly answered. Of course, it is entirely up to you…" He raised his arm towards the nearby window, and with a gust of wind that Mia could recognize as the Jupiter psynergy, slash, he shattered it. He put his foot on the bottom of the window sill, and said, "I hope that I will be seeing you soon. Good bye." He then leapt off of the second floor window, into the frigid cold. Mia blinked.

She rushed to the window. Looking outside for any trace of the man, she saw that he had vanished from sight.

"…" She sat on the edge of the bed.

'All questions you may have shall be gladly answered…' She thought to herself and sighed. '…I hope that the elevator is still working…'

Part Nine

The group was silent as they left the cave. Isaac still heard the horrid sounding voice of the shadow in his mind,

echoing a disgusting sound that sickened him to his stomach.

'But why did it say *my* name?' Isaac wondered. 'Jenna had been the one who killed it, not me, so that can't be the reason…' The question lingered in his thoughts as they crossed over the bridge the bridge that ran over the only river near Imil. While lost in thought he gazed upon the Mercury Beacon, shining high as the sun flew even higher above it. He forgot about the shadow's words for a moment and stopped, staring in awe at the bright blue light. He soon snapped out of his trance, however, when Jenna called his name.

"Isaac! Hurry up, we're almost there!" He looked at her and nodded. 'Almost there…' He thought. 'But how long has he been there?' They passed the outer edge of a forest and stopped. Three large Maulers were rushing towards them on all fours from across the remaining gap between them and Imil. Felix drew Excalibur from its sheath.

"Alright, then. I could use a warm up after missing the last fight."

The four charged the beasts, weapons ready, and prepared for a quick skirmish with monsters barely strong enough to stop them a year before when they were first encountered in battle. They would soon find out, though, that they were wrong.

Part Ten

He stopped at the base of Mercury Lighthouse. It was deserted, with no villagers from the town taking sips from the fountain of Hermes, likely due to the snow storm from

mere hours earlier. Approaching the fountains mouth, he caught water from it in the palms of his hands and drank. He stood up.

"...Much better..." He no longer limped, and the healing water served as temporary aid for his body. 'That should get me to the aerie in one piece...' He hopped onto the ladder that led up to the eastern elevator of the lighthouse. Flashing blue light from his palm, the elevator rose, slowly taking him to the peak of the incredible tower.

His heart was pounding with anticipation.

'*Imagine...*' A strange voice said to him in his mind. '*In mere moments you will be reunited with her.*'

'I know...' He thought, as though he were answering it. 'I am well aware of the importance of this day.'

'*Do not forget,*' the voice began again. '*What you owe me for aiding you in getting here...*'

'No.' He took a more serious tone. 'The deal has not been completed just yet. And even when she walks this earth again...' He paused his train of thought, then continued. 'There are still three more that will remain. Then, and only then,' the elevator arrived at the aerie, stopping with a loud noise. '...Will you have my body as your own...'

Part Eleven

Isaac leapt into the air and spun, landing just behind one of the Maulers.

He shouted, "Ragnarok!" and as the words left his mouth a huge sword of pure psynergy came crashing into the back of the beast in the center, stopping it and forcing it to the ground. The other two did not stop to give their brother aid, and each chose a target; one going after Jenna, the other attacking Felix. Garet jumped onto the fallen Mauler's back and attempted to slice its head off with his axe, but as his weapon hit the skin of the beast it did no damage, and the Mauler barely reacted.

"What in the--?" Garet attempted to say, but was flung off midsentence as the Mauler jumped up, landing on its two hind legs. Staring him down, it let out a horrible growl, loud enough to shake the snow off the top of a few nearby trees. Then Isaac stopped as he helped Garet to his feet.

"That--!" Isaac couldn't believe his ears.

"What is it, Isaac? What's the matter?" Garet was oblivious to what Isaac just heard.

Isaac shouted out across the battle field. "Jenna!!" He cupped his hands around his mouth and yelled. "That was the scream of a--!!"

Another howl was let out before he could finish, this time audible to the entire group. Jenna completed his sentence for him, alerting the rest to the danger.

"A shadow! They're possessed by shadows!!"

Part Twelve

Mia was frantically getting her things together, gathering up a few herbs from the drawers of desks and an elixir sitting on

a bookshelf. She put on a thicker robe, for she had changed out of her cold weather clothes when she brought the man upstairs. Picking up her staff, Lachesis' Rule, she headed down the stairs of the inn. She noted that nobody was in the first floor of the building.

'Hm,' she thought. 'That would explain why no one came upstairs with all the noise.' She exited through the front door. 'Wonder where they went…Oh well, can't dwell on that for too long. I have to get to the lighthouse aerie, and soon.' She walked out of the town. 'He was in a great hurry, so whatever it is that he needed to do will certainly be done before I get there if I don't hurry myself.'

Quickly moving towards the Mercury Lighthouse, she could only imagine what awaited her at the top of the mile-high tower. '…I hope that I'm not making a terrible mistake…'

Part Thirteen

Felix stepped back a few steps and raised his blade. A howl from the weapon entered his mind, a sound that only he, the weapons wielder, could hear; 'Legend!' A huge light purple disk of old runic markings quickly grew from thin air in the space above him. Then, in the center opening of the disk, came flying out three large images of the very blade he held; Excalibur. The three blades, formed from the ancient psynergy that Excalibur held from the metals that made it, flew into the chest of a standing Mauler, impaling it three times in its heart. The beast froze where it stood and looked at him. Without making a noise, it faded away into the wind, as all other shadows had before it.

"That's one." He said, relaxing his arm. "Who's next?" Garet had put his axe away after multiple failed attempts at killing a Mauler without psynergy, and said to him,

"My, my, Felix, such the egotistical one." As he finished the sentence he grunted and jumped over a Mauler that clawed at him. As soon as he landed, he turned and shouted; "Liquifier!!" A group of rings went into Garet as he said the name of one of his most powerful psynergy attacks, and the sound of an explosion soon followed, seemingly from nowhere. Then, out from below him shot up multiple rods of fire, disappearing in the cloudy sky for a moment. After a second of silence, they came crashing back down in a torrent of flames onto the Mauler Garet targeted, causing massive damage to it, and even slicing its left arm off in the process. This one did let out an agonizing scream as it died, but the sound faded as the creature slowly dissipated into nothingness.

"Well then," Garet said with a smile on his face. "I'm satisfied. Anything else?"

Isaac answered him from afar. "One more!"

He and Jenna were now teaming up against the final Mauler. He had attacked it earlier with several Venus attacks, but to no avail. He looked at Jenna and they both nodded to each other. Leaping back a few yards, they clasped their hands together and called out,

"Daedalus!!"

A loud rumble was then heard from the mountains behind them, followed by immediate silence. The Mauler stopped, puzzled as to why its foes ceased their attack. Then it looked up. What it saw was a gigantic golem-like statue, slowly climbing over the mountains, stopping at the peak of the

tallest one. Its chest opened up, with two huge plates that covered it sliding to the side, revealing several large openings, all surrounding a central one larger than the rest. Out of the multiple smaller holes shot out man-sized rockets traveling at incredible speeds; towards it. Seeing that it could not out run the shower of attacks, it fell to all fours and braced itself. The hail of missiles each landed mere feet away from their target, doing colossal damage to the Shadow-Mauler. But as the beast rose, triumphantly alive as the last missile fell, it saw that Isaac and Jenna were smiling. They pointed up, and as soon as the Mauler looked to where they pointed, a rocket of such huge proportions, launched from the summon Daedalus's central chest opening moments after the shower of smaller projectiles, smashed into the Mauler's body, completely obliterating it in an instant. While they could not see the shadow's final moments, they heard it scream a scream that shattered all thought of it arising alive once more. Isaac and Jenna rejoined Garet and Felix.

"Alright." Isaac said to his allies. "Let's go."

Part Fourteen

The man was still wearing his skull mask, and now had his hood covering his head. Standing in front of the huge Mercury Beacon, he heard the vicious voice of a demon echo in his mind. Looking up into the orb of psynergy, he stared with his own two eyes at the sight before him.

Floating in the center of the Mercury beacon he saw it; the faded silhouette of a young girl.

Chapter 5: Chapter 4: The Mercury Lighthouse

Trail Of The Age Walker – Chapter Four

Part One

Mia stepped onto the western elevator of the Mercury lighthouse, and used ply. As her psynergy sank into the stones she stood on, the diamond shaped elevator slowly came to life, carrying her bit by bit up into the air. As each floor was passed, the air grew thinner. When she had climbed the lighthouse in a more conventional way, she had enough time to adjust to the difference in air pressure each time she went up a staircase. But when going straight up, with no pause or break in the movement, she felt light headed as the aerie grew nearer. By the time she reached the top, she no longer had thoughts of what would await her at the top of the lighthouse. When the elevator finally stopped, she only wondered how she was going to survive long enough to see it.

'I can't…I can't breathe…' Mia collapsed to the ground, and lost consciousness, her last sight awake being the man she saved from the snow, staring back at her from behind a white skull mask across the aerie of Mercury lighthouse.

Part Two

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Isaac ran into the inn of Imil, searching for someone, anyone, who could tell him where the man they were chasing was. The inn was empty.

"Hello?" He called out to an empty room. "Is anybody there?" When he received no answer, he mumbled to himself, "Damn…!" and rushed upstairs to the second floor. 'Maybe they're all asleep…' He thought to himself. When he reached the top of the staircase, he saw no one lying asleep, but instead an un-made bed and a shattered window, along with assorted travel supplies scattered across the wooden floorboards. Jenna rushed up behind him.

"Anything?" She asked before seeing the shape of the room they were in. "…Oh. I guess that counts as something."

"Question is, what…" Isaac said to her. He slowly walked over to the side of the bed that he couldn't see from where he was standing, and gasped.

"What is it?" Jenna asked him, rushing over. Isaac raised up from the ground a light-blue robe, turned to Jenna and said,

"Mia…"

The pair rushed out of the inn and over to Felix and Garet.

"Let's go!" Isaac called out as he approached them. "To the Mercury lighthouse!" They nodded without a word of question, and followed him as he ran.

'And hopefully,' he thought to himself. 'To Mia…'

Part Three

Mia slowly opened her eyes, still finding it hard to breathe properly. She was about six feet away from the man in the skull mask, and was lying on the stone surface of the lighthouse aerie. The man was standing upright, staring deeply into the faded figure of a woman in the Mercury beacon. He was entranced; his natural eyes of blue and green were staring in awe, and in anticipation, at the silhouette. Then she heard a voice.

'*What are you waiting for, boy…?*' It was a voice she thought she had heard before, but she was unable to think straight. '*Begin the ritual!*'

Mia closed her eyes, unmoving, but did not pass out again. She lay silently, listening to the voice speak.

'I will begin in time…' A second voice entered, one she recognized as the man from before, that stood in front of the beacon. 'But first…' A bright flash of light opened her eyes, but the man paid her no attention. There was a swirling ball of white light in his palm, which seemed to be spinning as it rose slowly up. '…A little extra insurance. Even you cannot argue the danger those four pose to us, and the Commons I recently released into those Maulers have stopped sending back a mental signal.' She heard a chuckle, and then his voice continued. 'They are coming this way, to stop us. This soul shall stop them.' The ball of light flew up, and then violently slammed into the ground, creating a disk shaped white hole in the ground, resembling a portal that ran the length of the Mercury beacon. 'Or, at least slow them down. Now…'

'*Wait!*' the first, more demonic sounding voice spoke again. '*I feel another being is tapping into our minds…*'

Mia grew nervous as the man looked around. His head turned, and his eyes, now white once more, met hers

'*There you are...*' She tried to scream as he knelt down and reached out his hand, but no sound came out. '*Wide awake at last...*'

As the man blocked out her view, she saw a large black figure slowly rise up from the portal in the floor. Then her vision went black, and she passed out, unconscious.

Part Four

Felix ran into the base area of the Mercury lighthouse, just past the fountain of Hermes. He looked around.

"Where is everybody?"

"This is flu season," Isaac added. "There's usually a small crowd here with bottles to gather Hermes Water…"

"Why aren't they all here now?" Jenna asked, to nobody in particular. Garet ran up next to them.

"Better question; where are the elevators?" The group looked almost in unison at the east and west elevator pads, to see that they were both empty.

Jenna looked up to the top of the lighthouse. "There was only one of them, right? You don't think that he came back down to raise the other one, do you?"

"No…" Isaac looked to the aerie, impatience entering his voice. "But Mia would have probably followed him up there. She is the guardian of the Mercury lighthouse, after all."

"Which means we should hurry," Felix said. "She could be in danger." The group nodded, and Isaac ran to the front of statue, again blocking the way into the deeper sections of Mercury lighthouse, and raised his hands to face the stone obstacle.

'Move!' He thought, and a huge white hand created from the psynergy command he gave appeared, grabbing the statue and slowly pushing it off to the side.

He turned to the group. "Looks like we're taking the stairs." He hopped across the ditch between him and the arched door leading into the lighthouse. "Come on!"

Part Five

He removed a small black orb from his pouch, and raised it up to eye level. He sighed.

'To think, that this little orb which curses me so is the only way to bring them back…' He looked up at the beacon again. 'To bring her back…'

'*It is.*' The demon voice transmitted into his thoughts. *'Now use it! Time is not on our side!*' He used lift and the orb floated into the air, hovering as the hands disappeared just a few feet before the bright blue beacon. His eyes turned white, and his hands were suddenly covered with a dark mist.

'The Mercury lighthouse…' He thought. 'A prison if there ever was one.'

He raised his hands up to the air, and shadows- dozens of them- flew out into the sky, arching back down into the orb,

which, with each new shadow it absorbed, slowly began to inch closer and closer to the Mercury beacon, until finally it entered the blue aura, and the shadows stopped erupting from his palms. The black orb entered the body of the girl in the beacon, and began to glow, changing colors from black to blue. The girl did not move, and the light gave off an incredible shine that would blind a normal man. But the white eyes of the one who sent to orb in stared on, his arms now by his side, a shadow with purple eyes now standing behind him. He was silent, all senses focused on the task before him.

'I will free her.' He thought. 'None shall stand in my way.'

Part Six

Isaac was hopping from stone to stone, stopping at each to allow three golden halos to appear over his head. They somehow allowed him and his comrades to skip across the water that filled the lighthouse, which made traversing from one end of the giant pool-type area they were in to the other possible. There was only one problem; one would vanish for each step you took on water. While they certainly gained enough rings from each stone to make it to the next one, there was always the possibility…

"GAAH!!" Garet screamed as he fell into the water, gasping for breath and struggling to stay at the surface.

"Help me!! One of you, help me, please!!" He was sinking with each word, but Isaac and Felix were already on a solid base of stone blocks in the bottom left of the room, and would be unable to reach him in time. Jenna, however, was right behind him. She grabbed the back of Garet's shirt and

leapt from the power in her final gold ring from the water where he sunk back to solid ground. She just barely made it, landing on her side, and Garet was coughing up water as she stood.

"Are…Are you alright…?" She asked, catching her breath herself. Garet stopped choking long enough to answer.

"…Yeah, I'm good…Thanks, Jenna, you really saved me there…"

Isaac helped him up. "You know," he started. "I thought the myth that Mars adepts couldn't swim was-"

"Shut up, Isaac, I'm not in the mood."

He laughed as they moved on, progressing bit by bit through the puzzles of the Mercury lighthouse they solved one year before. As they pushed onward, however, a pair of red eyes followed them; hiding away in the shadows they passed around each corner. A low hiss could be heard, but it went unnoticed by the four adepts as they rushed past. A faded black body emerged from the dark, staring them down from behind. It turned towards them, and began to charge.

Part Seven

Mia awoke yet again, now at the base of the east staircase that led to the beacon of the lighthouse. She was now able to left herself up, and was not low on air, breathing perfectly, as though she were back at sea level. She walked up the stone stairs to see that the man was as still as a statue, facing the Mercury beacon as before. She saw that there was now an even brighter blue light within the light of the beacon, shining within the body of the girl floating in

the light. She also saw a man-like shadow with purple eyes walking towards her. She gasped and backed a few steps before nearly falling off the edge of the lighthouse, when she heard a voice from the shadow, speaking as clear as day.

"Peace, Miss Mia. I mean you no harm." It was the voice of the man she saw standing in front of the Mercury beacon, and the purple eyes of the shadow changed with a blink to the human eyes of the man she rescued.

"Now," he said. "I believe you had some questions for me."

Part Eight

Jenna stopped running. "Wait a second!" She shouted to the others. "I sense something coming…Something coming fast…" Garet stood unmoving, awaiting her next words, but Isaac and Felix were already in motion. When Jenna yelled her next words, they already had their swords drawn.

"It's a shadow!!"

A huge crash soon followed her words, and a loud roar came from around the corner they just passed from. Isaac and Felix darted around the turn, but stopped when they saw their foe. Their jaws dropped at the sight; what faced them, charging from the other side of the hallway with waterfalls lining one side, was a huge monstrosity of a beast. The shadow that ran toward them was nearly touching the ceiling, and wielded a huge mace that looked as though it could kill them with one swipe. With muscles larger than a small child on its arms and legs, it was like a shadow copy of a giant from old children stories. Jenna and Garet ran up next to them, and saw it themselves. They stood in awe and fear, but soon snapped out of it.

"Don't just stand there, you two!" Jenna said, shaking Isaac and Felix's shoulders. "Let's get started!"

She drew her sword, the Tisiphone Edge, and ran to confront the beastly enemy. Garet soon followed, readying his Stellar Axe for battle. Isaac drew the Sol Blade, and Felix Excalibur, and they followed suit, preparing for a fight that would test their abilities to the limits. Isaac thought to himself,

'Damn it! This is a waste of time…' The gap between them and the shadow was closing, and it let out a howling noise that shook the room. 'He must know we're down here…That we're coming up after him…'

Then a thought that shook him to the bone entered his mind.

'If he could create one of these things… Then who knows how many more he has?"

Part Nine

"What are you?" Mia blatantly asked him. The man seemed slightly thrown off, but in a shadow body it was hard for her to tell.

He answered her. "That is…" He paused to consider his words, and then said, "That is a rather difficult question, but I shall try my best to answer."

'I suppose that it's either this or a life debt…' He thought. 'Hm…'

"I am the vessel of a powerful demon into this world. I hold him back, tap into his power…" He looked back at his body,

standing perfectly still in front of the Mercury beacon. "And sometimes, I give him a physical form… My body."

"But why?" Mia asked him as he began to lose himself in thought. "Hm? You mean why deal with a demon? Why give him my body, knowing all the while I may never get it back?" He turned and looked into her eyes.

"Because it is worth the risk, Miss Mia."

"How so?"

"Let me ask you a question; have you ever lost a loved one before?"

"Um…" She hesitated, but then answered him. "Well, yes. My parents, my apprentice… A few people. Why?"

"Well, let me ask you this… Have you ever felt the pain of those loses for an extended period of time…?" He paused. "…Miss Mia…?" She answered nervously, but answered all the same.

"…Yes, the pain was horrible… But I moved on, as hard as it was…"

"Now let me ask you this…" He interrupted her. "Have you ever lost…" He stopped, and Mia saw on his misty face what seemed to be a single tear. "…Imagine something for me, please…" He had stopped making eye contact with her at some point in the conversation, and was now staring at the stone floor. "Imagine for a moment what it would feel like if every single person, all the people you love and that love you back…" He looked up from the ground. "…Died."

Mia was silent.

"Well? Can you imagine the horror of being left, literally, alone? To live a life of loneliness for the rest of your days…" His tone of voice deepened. "Well, Miss Mia…Can you?" Mia was sheepishly quiet, unsure as to what he was getting at.

"N-No…I can't…That sounds unbearable…"

"You're right, Miss Mia. It is. It most certainly is. Now let me ask you this; If you, at some point, found a way to bring them back, to revive them from the apparent 'dead,' then… Would you?" She did not respond. "If, after centuries of loneliness, of wandering an endless trail through the ages, watching as the world you once knew faded away with each passing day, you discovered a way to bring them back from their own personal hell… Then tell me, would you honestly think twice to do whatever is asked of you- to do whatever is necessary- to rescue them, to return them to your life?"

She didn't know what to do or what to say. She was strangely afraid, but not for her own life, but for the well being, both physical and mental, of the man before her.

"Now! Look into the Mercury beacon, Mia!" He was shouting now, and pointed into the bright blue light that topped the lighthouse. "Do you see the figure within? Do you see the girl floating in the light?" She nodded, but he didn't seem to really notice. "She is the first step in bringing back my brothers and sisters, the first stone of the foundation that was once my way of life, all those years ago!" Mia dared to ask a question during the pause of his rant.

"Who…Who is she?" He smiled a smile barely visible through the shadowy haze that surrounded him.

"She, my dear girl, is the center of my universe. Her name is Kagami," he said with affection in his voice.

"And with the aid of that demon, she shall walk this earth again."

Part Ten

"Granite!"

Isaac let loose one of his most valuable Djinn, Granite, which would create a nearly impassible barrier around him and his allies. It was only temporary, but it gave them enough time to prepare a powerful counter attack. The giant shadow swung its huge mace at Felix, who jumped right over it, easily dodging the slow attack. When he landed, he ran towards the shadow's legs and took a swipe at them, doing enough damage, or just annoying it enough, to cause the lumbering giant to fall a few steps back. This delay, coupled with the time the rest of the group spent on readying attacks, gave them an opening to cause massive damage and hopefully end the fight before anyone was too badly hurt.

Isaac attacked first. "Odyssey!" As he gave the command, two blades, about the size of a man, flew into the shadow as it stood. It let out a howl, but once the final, larger blade came crashing into its 'skull,' it screamed with rage. The shadow sounded different than the others they had fought up till then, but no one thought about that for long.

"Inferno!" Jenna fired out hundreds of small orbs of fire, which sped into the beast and exploded. It didn't set it on fire, but it knocked him back again. The Garet jumped into the air. In his mind, he could hear it, the voice of his Stellar Axe, unleashing its power onto his foe.

'Supernova!!' He came crashing down, and in a bright flash of light, he was standing back next to Isaac, Jenna and Felix, axe over his shoulder. The shadow was now, for all intents and purposes, bleeding. A huge gash was on its side, running up from its left foot up to the side of its neck, and while actual blood did not exit the creature, huge amounts of a thick black substance were pouring out of its side. The substance was lighter than air, apparently, and floated out rather than come out as blood would, and it disappeared as dead shadows had done in the past. While at first glance, one might be under the impression that it was somehow dividing, the horrible scream of pain it let out after it received the blow let Isaac and company know that this was the shadow equivalent of bleeding. Jenna stared in awe.

"It's…It's incredible…"

Isaac looked over to her and, a bit confused, asked, "What do you mean? What is?" She looked at him and said,

"Don't you feel it, Isaac?" He shook his head. "The black stuff that the shadow is leaking… It's pure psynergy." Felix turned to look back at the wounded shadow, while Garet listened in to what Jenna was saying.

"What does… How is that possible?" Isaac asked her.

"It looks almost like…" Jenna thought for a moment, and then said, "As though the very psynergy that powers the shadow is leaving it to die."

Part Eleven

The man's body suddenly moved, and the shadow that he seemed to be possessing turned to look at it.

"It has begun…" He said to himself, more than to her. "It has begun!"

The eyes of the shadow turned purple once again, and the white eyes of the man's body turned back to the blue-green color that they once were. The figure of a girl in the Mercury beacon was no longer a dark silhouette, and now features were able to be seen. She had long auburn hair, wore a loose fitting black kimono with a blood-red lining and sash. She looked to be of Eastern decent, as the name Kagami would imply, but she would seem a bit out of place in modern Xian. But Mia didn't pay too much attention to details of her outer image, as the blue orb was now in the man's hand again, black once more, and the girl was beginning to slowly float out of the Mercury beacon.

The man was nearly cackling, and a bystander would label him as insane, but Mia saw that his left eye was pure white, while his right was the more natural blue-green. From what Mia could gather, this meant that the man was currently sharing his body with the demon that he spoke of, and would not act of his own will as long as the demon was still there. He began to speak in a strange language Mia couldn't understand and did not recognize from her travels. He was chanting, but as for what he was saying, Mia could not decipher.

He continued, and Kagami slowly exited the bright blue beacon.

Part Twelve

The shadow was in a rage, slamming its mace with its good arm against the stone walls and floor. The four Adepts kept

their distance.

"Maybe if we just stay back," Jenna proposed, "then it will die off on its own…"

"Maybe…" Isaac repeated to himself. "…Maybe…" Garet was getting impatient, and stomped his foot when he said,

"That'll take too long; we should just finish it off now!"

"I agree." Felix added. "It is too large of a threat to leave alive for even a moment longer. Prepare a high level summon and let's get on with it." Before they had a chance to do anything, though, the shadow screamed out in rage, and dropped its mace to the ground. The four Adepts looked at it, thinking that it was in fact dying. They were wrong.

On the right hand of the creature, the fingers extended by a few feet, and sharpened at their points. Light reflected from the waterfalls onto them and they shined an intense glare. Its hand had just become a claw. It roared and charged, its blood red eyes fixed on Garet. Three of the Adepts, Isaac, Jenna and Felix, jumped back to prepare an attack, but Garet was motionless, staring back into the eyes of the shadow. His eyes opened wide just moments before he was within reach of the shadow's arm. When he realized this, he attempted to jump back as well. He failed.

"GAAAAAAAAAAAAAAHHHHHH!!" Garet screamed as he felt the impact of the shadow's attack. On his left arm, he now had a gash that ran its entire length, and he fell to his knees as the shadow readied to attack again. Felix intervened, and by jumping over Garet and kicking the shadow in its face, he delivered the finishing blow to the beast, and it fell back, fading away. Felix landed, and turned to cast Potent Cure, which stifled the pain from the wound in Garet's arm only long enough for a sigh of relief; after only a

few moments Garet fell to the ground again and writhed in pain. His screaming stopped.

Jenna ran over to his side. "Garet!!" She helped him up on her shoulder. "Garet, are you okay?" He nodded, but then said,

"The pain from the gash is gone…" He was gasping for breath as he spoke. "…But it feels like…The pain on the inside won't go away…" Isaac looked at the wound more closely. He saw nothing strange, as far as giant cuts in your side go, and went to help carry their comrade, easing the burden on Jenna.

"Should we go back?" Jenna asked, obviously scared for Garet's life.

"No!" Garet shouted. "I'm fine…" He looked up at Jenna. "I can't fight, but don't stop because of me. I can keep going." He glanced at Isaac. They nodded at each other and Isaac said,

"Alright then. Felix, take point ahead. We don't want to turn a corner and end up getting caught off guard."

Felix nodded and took the lead, Jenna and Isaac helping Garet along just behind him. The thoughts and feelings of the group covered a range of emotions, from anger and revenge to hope and anticipation, but they all focused in one way or another on the man who wore the skull mask, waiting for them at the aerie of Mercury lighthouse.

Part Thirteen

The girl named Kagami levitated to the ground, and, eyes still closed and with the appearance of being unconscious, went to her knees, slumped over. The man, now with both of his normal eyes again, tossed his skull mask to the side and put his hood down. Kneeling down to be at eye level with her, he lifted up her head with his hand, and her eyes wearily opened. Then they made eye contact, and they shot open, her jaw dropped with disbelief. A tear fell from the man's eye, and he leaned in.

"Kagami… My dear sister…" He said to her. "I've missed you so much…!" Silent, she shared a passionate kiss with him, with the Mercury beacon bathing them in light.

Chapter 6: Chapter 5: Princess Of The East

[Author's Note: I found a mistake I made in Part 8 upon a reread. Looks like I was rushing when I typed it, but it's fixed now.]

Trail Of The Age Walker – Chapter Five

Part One

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Their lips stayed in contact with each other for an entire minute, but the man cut it short and stood, helping the girl named Kagami to her feet. Her eyes had been closed during the kiss, but now they were staring deeply into his, wide open and showing the slightest hint of confusion. She opened her mouth to speak, but the man put his finger on her lips and she stopped herself. She was maybe two inches shorter than he was, and to Mia the scene looked a lot like a picture out of a romance novel she once read. She snapped out of the thought when the man started talking.

"I shall explain everything to you later, Kagami, but for now we must retreat to a safer location."

"We are…Unsafe?" Kagami glance at Mia for a moment. "Is it because of her?" The man looked back at Mia then at Kagami again.

"No, she is not the threat that I am referring to; on their way here right now is an extremely powerful Venus Adept

attempting to stop me from-" Mia's eyes shot open.

'A Venus Adept?' She thought. 'Could he possibly mean… No, he can't be referring to Isaac… Could he?' Kagami broke Mia's train of thought.

"I don't understand, brother…" She started. "Who would try to stop such a noble cause?" Mia mentally smacked herself.

'I completely missed what he said while I was thinking…'

"I can't help but think that you have done something…" She looked at him with a hint of suspicion in her eyes. Apparently he noticed, but stared back at her with a stoic gaze.

"…I did nothing that would dishonor our family, Kagami," he said, apparently trying to make himself keep eye contact with her. "But there is no time to explain what has happened while you were gone here and now. As I said, we must make haste if we hope to get ahead of our foe!" He was speaking in an obvious tone of desperation now.

"…"

Kagami looked into the man's eyes for what felt like hours. He was clearly getting impatient, but kept silent. Then, they both suddenly opened their eyes wide, and turned to face the east elevator. Kagami spoke.

"Do… Do you feel that power, too?" The man stared at the diamond elevator in disbelief, despite there being nobody there. Yet.
"I do, Kagami… And that is why we should have ran, while we had the chance…" The two of them again acted in unison by looking into each other's eyes, staying silent. It seemed that they would start to kiss again, when the man suddenly

broke the silence. "…I have a gift for you, Kagami…" He took out his black orb with his right hand, and as it glowed a slim silver staff slowly formed in his left. It was topped with the image of a strange creature that represented a dragon or a serpent, and the staff itself seemed to be taller than Kagami herself was, which became fairly obvious when she took it in her hand.

"You… You kept it safe all these years…?" He nodded.

"And now is the time to use it once again, dear sister. So prepare yourself…" He put the black orb away in his satchel and went to go pick up his white skull mask, which was tossed fairly far across the aerie. "For the enemy approaches us, thirsting for blood."

Mia was still standing off to the side, silent as the man stopped on his way back to Kagami's side. He looked at her. "…I never told you my name, did I Miss Mia…" She slowly shook her head. "Hm. Then keep your ears open," he said, putting on the skull mask. "For it shall only be uttered once…" He stared at the elevator, and Kagami followed suit. "When the foe rises to meet us, they shall hear these words…" A moment passed, and then he said,

"…I am Cyrus, servant of the gods."

Part Two

The four Adepts approached a door with water pouring down violently on the other side. At least, that seemed to be the case at first, but when they came closer they saw that, in truth, the waterfall on the other side of the stone archway was flowing up, and very rapidly.

'Just like before…Jeez…' Isaac thought. 'For an entire year, this waterfall has been practically flying upwards…' He passed through it with Garet and Jenna after Felix leaped through on his own first, both because he was to make sure that no monsters awaited them on the other side and because he was the only one not helping carry Garet, so he could get through easier alone then at the same time as the rest of the group.

'I'm glad that it still is, though, because if it wasn't then we'd be screwed without Mia to use ply and get it flowing again.' He ran through the water's flow with Jenna and Garet as fast as they could, so that they would not be dragged up before they were ready. Felix was looking up to the top of the 'waterfall' and sighed.

"What is it?" Jenna asked him.

"…That's a long drop, don't you think?" She looked up and gulped.

"Yeah… It really is…"

"Weird." Felix added. "It looked shorter last time."

"Well then," Isaac interjected. "I suppose that we had better not fall down. So, if you don't feel like wasting any more time…" He motioned at the waterfall, and Felix nodded. Jenna looked concerned.

"What about Garet? Can he go up this thing and still be alright?"

"I'll be fine…" Garet struggled to stand on his feet, and had his arm over Isaac's shoulder. "I can't stand very well, but I think I can handle just sitting there as water pushes me up a

few thousand feet. Just…" He paused and looked up. "Give me a push and I'll be fine."

Isaac blinked, and shoved Garet into the upward flow of water. He flew straight up, and Isaac laughed to drown out the string of profanity Garet was shouting back at him. Jenna stared blankly at him, then, once he had stopped laughing and looked back at her, was shoved in himself and flew up with the waterfall after Garet. Jenna allowed herself a few quick chuckles, and then jumped in as Felix silently shook his head.

'They joke around now, but they mustn't forget…' He stepped into the waterfall. 'What lies ahead could kill them if they aren't careful. Please, Isaac, Jenna, Garet… Keep your wits about you…' A bright white light slowly erased his vision, and he closed his eyes.

'…And don't make me carry you back to Vale dead…'

Part Three

Isaac slowly opened his eyes. He was lying on the stone elevator high atop the Mercury lighthouse, along with Jenna, Garet and Felix, all of whom were here the last time he awoke atop the lighthouse, as well. However, they were not all on the same side the last time.

'Now, though,' he thought. 'We each came together; each prepared to fight an extremely skilled and deadly Adept, who seems to have complete control over an army of shadow demons.'

"Isaac… Look at that…" Jenna said to him as she was looking out across the aerie. He gasped.

'I… I can honestly say that I wasn't prepared for that…'

The man who wore the skull mask was standing proudly and full of arrogance, staring down Isaac personally. But that was expected. What wasn't expected was the girl in a black and red kimono standing next to him, armed with a silver staff. Another surprise was the third person standing at the center of the aerie.

Isaac yelled out as loud as he could as she looked the other way, seemingly forcing herself not to look.

"Mia!"

She turned so slowly to face him that he thought she might never turn around. Then he saw her face. As soon as she turned and saw him, she just as quickly turned away, holding back tears.

'What the…?'

The man in the skull mask called out to him when he saw Isaac's face.

"Come now, child…" He sounded pleased. "Don't you just hate to see a young girl cry…?" He began to laugh degradingly at him. Isaac immediately made his way towards the center tower of the aerie, the rest of his group close behind him. The man drew his gold lined katana and stood ready for a fight, and the girl next to him stood proudly and unmoving, long brunette hair flowing behind her. She stared him down.

"…So then…" She said when Isaac reached the top of the final staircase. "This is the boy you meant?"

The man nodded.

"Yes. Their timing is impeccable, don't you think?"

"Yes… Now I get to warm myself up after all these years."

The man chuckled as he removed the mask he wore.

"I'm glad that you found some friends to aid you, boy…" He placed the mask on a hook that was on his belt. "But you still don't stand a chance!" His left hand was suddenly wrapped in flame, and he said, "For I am Cyrus, servant of the gods!" The girl followed suit with her own name and epithet.

"And I am Kagami, Princess of the East!" In unison, they both then said,

"Show us your might, so that we may strike you down!"

Part Four

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

The caravan was thrown up and down as it went over the road of dirt and rock. A younger Cyrus, exactly 16 years old, sat next to a highly decorated soldier near the back of the caravan near its exit. He had a bored expression on his face, of someone who did not want to be where he was. In his hand, resting partially against the solid bench that lined the inside of the caravan, was a long sword, its sheath covered in gold markings of an ancient language. The soldier had by his side an iron spear, slanted as he held it so that it would not be stabbing through the top of the caravan. He wore heavy armor, and appeared to be of exceptionally high rank and standing. Cyrus sighed.

"What is it?" The guard asked him. Cyrus did not respond, and continued to look out through the break in the curtain that covered the back of the caravan, out into the vastness of the Mogall prairie. "…Are you still angry at your brother?" Cyrus only blinked as he stared outside. The guard sighed.

"You know, it is not my place to solve disputes within the royal family, but…" He paused, carefully considering his next words. "…You must understand the necessity of these visits. Without the unification of the entire continent, wars will no doubt engulf Angara."

"I don't see how that forces me to go a hundred miles from my home" Cyrus said, still looking out into the grassland that they rode through. "And why in the name of all that is holy is there no paved road going through here, Richard? I am this close to throwing up out the back of this thing…" The caravan bounced up again, almost on cue. He sighed angrily. "This is such a waste of time…"

The guard, Richard, patted his shoulder. "Well, it'll all be over soon enough if you just let things run their course." The caravan stopped, and a guard's voice outside started calling out orders. "Well, my lord," Richard said to Cyrus. "It seems that we've arrived." He grabbed his blade and hitched it on his side, then jumped out of the caravan. Richard soon followed.

"Well, Cyrus," he said. "Welcome to Xian." Cyrus began to walk towards the village, as they stopped on the other side of a small field of grass, instead of next to the actual town itself.

"Go and find Eden for me, Richard, would you? I'm going to take a look around."

"Yes, sir."

When Cyrus reached the front of the village, he nearly gasped at how foreign it all was. What he was used to was living in a castle, with the average citizens residing in wood and straw homes. Here, just on the other side of a river, the whole population seemed to live in small mansions, with red pointed rooftops, extravagant designs on the doors and walls, and the clothes they wore incredibly fancy silk kimonos.

He walked through the village, taking it all in, not noticing a girl of his same age with brunette hair, staring him down from atop a cliff with another large house on it.

'Westerners…' She thought to herself. 'We don't need their kind here…' She wore a long black kimono with a red sash and lining, her most favored dress clothes that she had been told to wear for the occasion. 'The only occasion today is the stealing of our homeland.' She spat into the dirt. 'I'll show him…'

"HEY!" She called out across the town. Most of the people were still inside, so it was really only the two of them for the moment. Cyrus looked up. Seeing the evil glare that was given to him, he felt it would only be proper to return it with his own. "What do you think that you're doing in Xian, foreigner?" He didn't respond. "Answer me!"

Cyrus didn't move, continuing to stare her down. 'Hmm… This may be a good opportunity to test out my new ability at a distance…' He raised his hand towards her, and she gasped.

'Is he-!' She thought. 'No, he wouldn't be attacking me, would he…?' His palm glowed a shade of purple, and she then felt a strange sensation in her mind. 'Gah! What is

this... Why does my head feel like this all of the sudden...?' Cyrus began to chuckle, and she could hear him in her mind.

'*I guess that means that it works quite well.*' She couldn't believe it. He was transmitting thoughts to her mind. '*My name is Cyrus Calren. May I ask yours?*' She didn't respond. '*...I suppose that I'll just peak into your memories and see then...*'

'Kagami.' She answered quickly. 'Kagami Yuki.'

'*Well then, Miss Yuki, why such an untactful expression?*' Cyrus was walking up the staircase embedded into the rock face towards her.

"..." She didn't say anything.

"...You're not very social outside of your own, are you?" He asked her. She slowly shook her head.

"Well, how would you like it if an army invaded your home town?" Cyrus was silent, and she pointed to the caravans off in the distance. "Your soldiers subjugate us openly, and they tax us heavily, and now they bring their leaders to seal the annexation of our people!" She raised her voice at him. "And now they bring in fully-fledged Adepts," she said, referring to him. "No doubt to stop any resistance we may give you..." Cyrus had a stoic expression.

"Hm. You are mistaken, Miss Yuki-"

"My name is Kagami." She interrupted him midsentence. "'Miss Yuki' may be what you would call me across the river, but here we have no need for such formalities."

"Ah. In that case, I apologize, Kagami." He walked up next to her, and then continued. "But as I was saying, you are

mistaken. I am not here to-"

He was interrupted by and huge explosion, destroying a building and catching the surrounding trees behind it on fire. Then, out of the flames emerged a charging group of what could only be Mars Adepts. They were all armed with axes, with knifes on their belts, and each wore the most recognized uniform in eastern Angara; the red and brown of the Forager Bandits.

"Well…" Cyrus said off handedly. "That's awfully bad timing, isn't it?" Kagami shoved him.

"You have time to make jokes? They are attacking the village!" He straightened himself out and drew his sword from its sheath.

"Well then, Kagami," He said calmly. "We should probably go and stop them, now shouldn't we?" He turned, and leapt down from the cliff that they were standing on, and as soon as he hit the ground he began to charge towards the invaders. He called out, "Subeta senkou!" and his long sword began to glow bright white, and once he reached a bandit that went out on his own, he sliced the brigand cleanly in half. Kagami's jaw dropped.

'That sword is… That weapon is one of the Saigo-no artifacts!' She readied her own weapon, a long silver staff, and jumped down as well. She called out her own command,

"Gin yari! Aratameru!" and her silver staff glowed white and turned into a spear. While Cyrus was charging into the crowds of bandits exiting the burning woods, she was aiming deliberately at individual foes, shooting psynergic ice horns and impaling them at a distance. While this gave her distance from her foes temporarily, those that she didn't hit immediately surrounded her, preparing to slice her into

pieces. She readied a Mercury attack to try and take as many of them as she could with her to death, and kneeled as she prepared it. Then she heard a voice.

"Flare storm!" It was Cyrus, and as soon as he said the words, a huge wave of flames crashed into one side of the circle of bandits that surrounded her. Cyrus leapt over the ones he didn't hit, and smirked at her. "Giving up already, Kagami?" He helped her to her feet, and then stood with her back to back.

"No, Cyrus, I'm just getting started."

"I see that you're an Adept." He said to her.

"I am not an Adept. I am a warrior." Three bandits charged them from the group, one being stabbed by Kagami's spear; the other two were sliced by Cyrus's blade.

"Very well, then…" he said repositioning himself."I was trying to tell you that you're under the wrong impression, before our new friends started blowing things up." Another bandit attacked, and was run through by his sword.

"Well, right now is not a very good time to educate me. Let us focus on the battle at hand." He nodded in agreement.

"As you say, warrior." They jumped in opposite directions and attacked the brigands that they landed next to.

Part Five

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

"Searing beam!" Cyrus called out as the attack left his hand. Isaac quickly rolled to one side as the beam missed him by inches. Once he was on both of his feet again, his sword glowed golden and he leapt into the air towards Cyrus.

"Flint!" Cyrus smiled devilishly as he threw his hand up to block. Isaac landed and their swords met, but Isaac gasped when he saw that his blow was blocked by the hilt, not the blade, of his foe's katana. His fingers were missed, but only barely. Seeing Isaac's expression, he laughed and said,

"I can't have you scratching up my blade, now can I? Now…" He pushed him back and his katana began to glow. "Gobudameshi!" The jump that followed bordered on flight, and when Cyrus came crashing down, Isaac had just enough chance to use the powers of another Djinn.

"Granite!" A solid barrier appeared before him, and the katana slammed into it, just inches away from him. Isaac could see that the blade of the katana was incredibly sharp, sharper than it was before, and seemed to be pressing forward without any force being used. Cyrus leapt back, and looked at the girl standing next to him.

"Well, Kagami, do you plan on joining in?" She sighed sarcastically.

"What, you can't handle a few children?"

"It's not the children I'm worried about, I'm simply concerned for the well-being of your skill, is all."

She raised her staff so that it went from left to right over her head, and began to spin it. "Well then," she said as it began to glow. "I'll show you that a Princess's skills never dull! Now! Gin yari!" She slammed the head of the staff down, and held it so that it extended a few feet before her.

"Aratameru!" The glow vanished in a small explosion-like effect, and the staff had become a spear. Cyrus smiled.

"There." He said, satisfied. "Now here comes the fun part…"

Part Six

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

Only three bandits remained, rushing out of a house with jewelry and silk clothing, completely oblivious to the situation occurring around them. When they realized that their comrades had been defeated, they grabbed what they could and ran. Kagami prepared to go after them, but Cyrus put his hand on her shoulder.

"What are you doing? They're getting away, let go of me!"

"Calm down, Kagami. There is no reason to pursue them any longer. We have more important things to do right now." She stopped struggling against his grasp, but still spoke with a frustrated tone.

"Like what?" He pointed over his shoulder.

"Like the fire raging through the forest that's about to burn down the whole village. Now come on, you have Mercury powers, so we'll need your help here." She looked at the blaze started during the fight that the bandits caused, along with the few villagers attempting to quell the spread of the flames. There was not a Calren soldier in sight. She sighed.

"…Alright, then, any ideas on how to stop it?"

"Depends…" He reached into his bag and pulled out a small blue disk that seemed to be dripping as though it were a piece of melting ice. "Do you know 'Douse?'" She shook her head.

"No, I only recently gained full psynergy abilities, and focused on offensive techniques. Do you?" He held it up the small disk in his hand.

"With this, I don't need to. It's called a 'Douse Drop,' and the wielder of it can temporarily use that Mercury power, no matter what their element is. Here," He put it in her hand. "Seeing as you already have Mercury powers, its strength should be amplified when you use it. Try it out by putting out those flames over there." He motioned at the Inn, which had caught fire during the raid. She raised the hand that held the Douse Drop to the sky and let out the command with a thought.

'Douse!'

Suddenly, a cloud created from psynergy appeared over the roof of the Inn, and a downpour of water came out from it. The fire was almost instantly quenched, and Cyrus actually looked surprised.

"Well now…" He said in awe. "It never did that well when I used it…" The cloud faded away, and she turned to him.

"No time to dwell on that, let's go!" she ran off to another burning building and repeated the process.

'Hm…' Cyrus thought. 'I think I see why fate has brought me here…' He ran to catch up with her as the rain from the Douse cloud stopped another home from being completely destroyed. Citizens were now stopping and gazing at the girl work, ending the fire's chaos bit by bit with ease when they

could not. 'She has amazing power; the most I've ever seen in a non-Calren.' He caught up with her and stopped. 'I wonder…' He thought of his older brother, who forced him to accompany him on his trip here. 'Could this girl be the true reason we're here?' Kagami continued to put out the flames, as he stared in amazement at her skill over Mercury's might.

Part Seven

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Cyrus was exchanging blades with both Isaac and Felix at once, while Kagami and Jenna dueled on the other side of the aerie. Cyrus, being the excellent swordsman he so obviously was, had no trouble blocking any attack the two Venus Adepts attempted, stopping each coming blow with his blade this time, rather than his hilt. Kagami, however, was going on the offensive, quickly thrusting her spear as Jenna dodged slightly quicker side to side. Jenna was forced to take a step back each time she dodged, and because of this she was swiftly losing ground. Unlike Cyrus, who wore a mask to hide his facial expressions in battle, Kagami had no such accessory, her face revealing every twitch of the eye that happened upon her whilst engaged in combat. While most opponents did not notice any small details of expression that would aid in achieving victory, the keenest of adversaries would; distracted eyes, twitches that imply an approaching opening, anything that would give them a quick edge to overtake the attacker. Jenna was one such person with keen eyes, and as she dodged closer and closer to the edge of the lighthouse's aerie, she kept a close eye on Kagami's face.

Then she saw her opening. Kagami had lunged a bit too far forward with one of her jabs, but what Jenna noticed was the quick look of shock she had on her face.

'Apparently,' Jenna thought, 'she had expected to hit.' Jenna used the chance to swing her blade around and take a slice at Kagami. She hit.

Kagami staggered back as she was almost thrown to the side with the force of impact the blade itself had, let alone the cut it left in her side. It had cut her mostly on her left arm, grazing her chest as Jenna pulled back. Kagami stopped and almost fell to her knees, struggling to keep balance as she regained her composure. Jenna waited for her to get back on her feet, using the time to ready searing beam, which was delayed by a rather long time due to the Mercury beacon. Cyrus didn't wait, and after he saw that his ally had been wounded, he switched from a calm fighter to an enraged berserker.

"Kagami!" he screamed when repelling another attack from Felix. Felix attempted to use the chance to hit him with spire, but when Cyrus stopped the attack with his hand alone, Felix was practically a statue. Cyrus tossed the stone to one side, and then sprinted towards Jenna. Isaac saw that his sword was glowing again.

"Jenna, look out!" He used all of his energy to conjure up a powerful Odyssey, and one of the small initial swords blocked Cyrus as he ran. When he stopped, the second small sword hit him. Then the last one came, and slammed into him, taking him all the way across the aerie and almost over the side. He was coughing up blood, but he didn't seem hindered much by whatever internal damage he was suffering. Once he reached Kagami, however, his ability to stand was drastically reduced, and he nearly fell to the

ground along with Kagami herself. Isaac looked on with both amazement, and fear.

'I can't believe he's still standing after that!' he thought. 'What in the hell is this guy made of?'

Cyrus used Potent Cure on Kagami's wound as she used Pure Ply on his, both leaning on the other for support. Isaac Felix and Jenna didn't move to attack them, but all three stood ready. Garet and Mia, both on the sidelines but on opposite sides of the aerie, looked on as well. A strange spell had seemed to be cast over them all as their foes worked. It was a strange sight; where one person rested on the one they healed as that very same person did the exact same thing to them. After they both were healed to an extent where they could fight once more, Cyrus slowly turned towards Jenna and looked at her through his mask with no emotion in his eyes; stoic and chilling. Kagami turned her attention to Isaac, and did the same with an expressionless gaze.

'They have switched opponents wordlessly…' Mia thought. 'I wonder what's going through their minds…'

Part Eight

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

The fire was completely put out, almost exclusively by Kagami and the Douse Drop. Cyrus walked up next to her as the final storm cloud faded into the wind, and saw she had lost the look of ambition she had moments earlier.

"Something the matter?" He asked her, almost immediately regretting the stupidity of his question.

'*Of course* something was the matter,' he thought. 'Her entire hometown was nearly burnt to the ground!' But despite the question, she did not turn and lash out at him; she simply stared at the ruble of the home she just doused, charred and mostly ash. It was not a pleasing sight.

"…Where were all of the soldiers that came with you…?" she asked him rather distantly. It took Cyrus a moment to gather what she was asking him, and he didn't have an answer. He quickly turned to look off in the distance, in the direction of where the caravans he came in had stopped. They were gone, but it seems that most of the supplies they unloaded remained. It must have been a hasty exit.

Before he could say anything, Kagami said it for him. "… They left, didn't they…?" She fell to her knees when Cyrus didn't respond, but she did not look like she was about to cry. "…Just like before…Just like when…" Now she was beginning to shed tears, and they sparkled as they glided down her face. "Your people have never been here for us… They have never once been here to protect us, their so-called 'most valued colony;' a jewel. If we are the most valued, then I would hate to see what happens in the North, to the cities you have settled yourselves!" She wiped away the tears, and Cyrus remained silent. "…Did you ever hear about the Mogal Raid, ten years ago…" She still wasn't looking at him, merely staring into the ruble. "…Cyrus? Did you?"

"No…" he responded with quietly.

"It happened late in the night, and was perpetrated by the same bandit group that attacked today." Blinking away more tears, she continued. "…There was a regiment of Calren soldiers stationed at the next town. We were told after the raid that they had received word of our plight, but no

soldiers ever arrived!" She looked at him, trying to appear angry behind the wall of tears. "Almost all of my family died that day, and I- at the age of 6!- watched them get slaughtered by the invaders from a retreating caravan. I could only see the town from the light of the very flames that engulfed it, and on that day I made a vow- to first gain my revenge on the bandits for killing my people..." Her gaze was empty, and she seemed to be talking more to herself now, than to him. "...And then on Calren, for standing idly by as they did."

Cyrus was silent, not knowing what to say at this. "...But now..." she started again. "When a warrior from the Calren army comes to my city... Why am I unable to strike?" She then leaned forward and hit the ground in a furious rage, the tears flowing more than ever. "Why can't I...? Damn it, Cyrus, why did you help us! If you had just done what the rest of your kind had, then I could kill you and be done with it! Why did you have to save me!" Clutching her face, she cried wordlessly as Cyrus walked over to her and knelt down by her side. Putting his hand up, he almost had it on her shoulder when he stopped himself. He lunged, and Kagami gasped as her hands dropped and she realized what he was doing. He was hugging her.

But he was doing something else, as well. During his embrace of her form, he slipped into the hand of Kagami a silver dagger with a black handle, whispering into her ear;

"If it would wipe away your tears... Strike away..."

Part Nine

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

The two sides were at a temporary standoff, with the tensions between them rising with each passing second. Cyrus took off his skull mask and had casually cast it to the side, revealing his face to the few who opposed him who had yet to see it. It was mostly covered in dripping blood from the wound Kagami healed, but his expression could be made out; it was one of glaring stoicism, and Kagami shared it as well. Holding his katana in his hand as he stood almost lazily in front of Jenna, Cyrus suddenly jolted forward, and lunged. Distracted by this movement toward their ally, Isaac and Felix were left open to a similar movement by Kagami, who was using her spear head to slice at one of the boys while the butt of the weapon blocked hasty attacks from the other. Cyrus slashed skillfully at Jenna as she attempted to block the incoming blade, but while Isaac and Felix were able to avoid taking damage, Jenna was not. Feigning an attack towards her right arm, Cyrus spun around and sliced into her left. When Jenna stopped to clutch her wound, Cyrus kicked her back almost ten feet across the aerie and she screamed in pain. When Isaac saw this, he dropped his guard and called out.

"Jenna!"

Kagami's face showed the slightest hint of satisfaction as she slammed the blunt end of her spear into Isaac's face, hitting him with so much force that he was almost immediately knocked unconscious. Felix didn't fare much better for much longer, and soon only the bystanders, Garet and Mia, remained up, and neither would stand a fraction of a chance against the duo that defeated their comrades. Walking towards each other, Cyrus lifted his mask up from the ground as he went passed it, and hitched on his belt. Meeting up in front of the beacon, the two looked into each other's eyes and wordlessly made their way to the western elevator. As the sound of shifting stone grew softer, Mia and

Garet were left atop the lighthouse with their fallen allies. Stunned, Mia did not move until she heard Jenna's desperate plea for help. Rushing over to her, she used her healing psynergy to bring her back from the brink of death by blood loss, and repeated the process with Isaac and Felix.

The group was still unmoving as they got up one by one hours later, with Garet and Jenna's wounds healed, Isaac and Felix awake once more, and Mia left feeling betrayed.

They sat and stood in silence as the shame of defeat slowly fell over them.

Cyrus and Kagami were a fair distance away from the Mercury lighthouse, in a large grassy field near Kolima. Walking swiftly, the two were silent. But in their minds, thoughts went from one to the other, psynergy waves filled with information flew back and forth to bring Kagami up to speed with what couldn't be said at the aerie, and, for Kagami's amusement, things to make Cyrus blush. Their faces stayed generally stoic, but their emotions went wild.

After over twelve hundred years, they were reunited, together again as destiny set for them, years ago.

And nothing was going to stop them.

[Author's Note: This chapter was going to have a lot more in it, but it getting a bit too long. The rest of what would have been there will be in Chapter 6. Also, regarding the mistake; it was about Kagami's age. To clarify, she was 16- same age as Cyrus.]

Chapter 7: Chapter 6: Ancient Xian

[Author's Note: It's been three months. I figure this needs to be updated or thrown in the trash, and seeing as tossing out the idea is completely out of the question, I'm splitting what would be the full chapter six in half with what I've got now. It actually works out pretty well, and stops the chapter from going too far past 4,000 words, which is where I try and keep each update around. I'll try to keep this up and update it again later this month, but I make no promises.]

Trail Of The Age Walker – Chapter Six

Part One

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

Hours later, the two were silent. Standing atop the hill where they had been before the battle started, what seemed like an eternity had passed before caravans were sighted in the distance. Cyrus clouded his mind, doing the same for Kagami, making them hidden to any adepts who would search for them using psynergy. He felt the presence of his mentor and oldest brother, the tall and imposing Mars Adept that sat upon the throne of Calren. He stood ready, but knew that if the encounter was to turn violent, even all of his powers combined with Kagami's would be a futile defense against him. 'If that is the case,' Cyrus thought. 'Then I had better handle this effectively…'

After a few minutes of waiting, a single caravan approached the base of the cliff the two stood on, stopping a few dozen yards back. Cyrus recognized it immediately as the one he

arrived in, and was not surprised when his bodyguard, Richard, stepped out.

"Wait here," he said to Kagami, without turning to look at her. "I'll be back soon."

She stepped back, out of view of the caravan, and Cyrus walked down the stone stairs to meet the armor-clad Richard.

When Richard saw him, the two approached and stopped a few feet away from one another. Cyrus hide his anger with an unsettlingly stoic expression, while Richard was obviously uncomfortable underneath his armor and mail. When Cyrus didn't say anything, Richard spoke first.

"I'm glad to see that you are alright." His voice was followed by silence. "…Eden wishes to speak with you, sir." Cyrus didn't move, nor respond in any way. Two seconds went by before Richard could no longer maintain his composure. "… Cyrus, please, you must understand; Eden had given us strict orders not to intervene. I-"

Cyrus put his hand up. "Stop. I don't want to hear it." The anger within him flashed in his eyes. "What happened was unacceptable. This village was nearly wiped out, and not one soldier came to its aid. I don't want to hear what your orders were: I can tell that you were told to stay back. I want to hear from the man who gave you those orders." He sighed. "…Where is my brother?"

Richard gestured back toward the open field his caravan rode in from, off to the side of which there was a small hill. "Just beyond there, at a camp site. I shall take you in my…" Cyrus glared at him. "…Or perhaps you'd rather walk…?"

Cyrus's eyes gave him the answer. "…I see…" Richard climbed back into the caravan's hold, and the driver whipped the reigns of his horses. They turned the wagon around, and rode back toward the Calren camp. When they were out of view, Cyrus shot a mental message to Kagami, and started walking. His mind was filled with emotions: anger, hate, and, more subtly, love. He wanted answers. And whether or not Eden wanted to give them to him, he wouldn't stop until he got them.

Part Two

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Isaac and his group stood in the center of the aerie of Mercury lighthouse. Mia had healed all those who were injured, but had not said a word to any of them. Garet still rubbed his arm, despite it being fully healed. Jenna stood next to Felix, who was looking with an emotionless expression into the Mercury beacon. Isaac approached Mia.

"Mia…" He started. "I'm… I'm glad you're safe. After seeing you up here, I was worried that…"

She didn't say anything, instead continuing to look out over the snowy lands far below them.

"…I…"

She turned towards him, and he stopped himself. She said,

"…Why did this happen…?"

"…Mia?"

"Why did all of this happen to us?" Her tears were gone, but her voice cracked, as if she were starting to cry again. "Just yesterday, everything was at peace. Then that man came… There are so many questions that I can't find the answers for…" She looked at the beacon, and took a few steps towards it. "I don't have a very good grasp of what's going on… All I can see from today is the foreshadowing of future chaos…" She paused. "And I can only see that man- Cyrus- as its cause." She shook her head slowly, as if in disbelief. "…I don't know if I can handle all this…"

Isaac put his hand on her shoulder. "I know what you mean, Mia. This is all a lot for me to take in, too. But you have to trust me when I say that we *will* find him. We will get our answers, and we'll stop Cyrus from getting whatever it is that he's after."

"That's right."

Mia looked up to see Garet, adding his own words of encouragement. "We lost this time, but that's no reason to be discouraged. We just have to keep trying after him." He smiled. "Besides, we've faced tougher than him. He just caught us off guard. We'll get him next time."

Mia felt herself smile a little, too.

"Well," Felix said, turning away from the beacon's light. "If we're going after him, we should head out now. There's no telling how far ahead they've gotten as we've been regrouping."

Isaac nodded. "Right. Mia," he looked over to her. "Will you come with us?"

All four of the other adepts looked at her in the moments before she answered, as if trying to give her incentive to join

them. But to her, she needed no persuading. She made up her mind.

"Yes," she said, to her glad group of allies. "I'm coming with you."

Isaac smiled. "Then let's go."

Part Three

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

The hill seemed to get higher and higher as he got closer, and Cyrus soon found that there was no simple- or rather, quick- way to get around it on foot. Horse driven caravans could ride around it in minutes, but walking around it would take much longer. And Cyrus wasn't in a very patient mood.

He began the perpetual climb up its side, treading up the hill's slope as quickly as he could without exhausting himself. The hill was covered in grass, but underneath the green was a misshapen, uneven ground of rocks and hidden ledges. It was, for all intents and purposes, a mini-mountain. But Cyrus had hiked through the true mountains of the Goma Range multiple times, and so the hill was more of an annoyance than an obstacle. When he reached the top, he saw the Calren campsite.

Three fires were already set up, and the caravans were scattered about around them with soldiers standing nearby. One stood separate from the rest, with four guards surrounding it. It was lined with decorative red cloth, and the horse at its head was dressed with velvet coverings. It was Eden's caravan, but Cyrus doubted that the king was

inside. And as he reached the base of the hill, standing on flat ground again, his thoughts were confirmed.

"Ah, Cyrus." Cyrus turned his head to see his older brother, dressed like the royalty he was in golden armor and a crimson garment. His voice was deep and commanding, even when saying something casually, and his very appearance demanded respect. "I'm glad that you came. I was worried for a moment that I'd have to come looking for you." He smirked and shook his head, stepping closer to Cyrus, and said, "And you know that I can't be wasting my time playing hide-and-seek."

"Eden…" Cyrus stood firm as the king of Calren approached. "I have a few things I need to ask you."

"In time, little brother, in time." He gestured with his hands. "But first, tell me; did you meet the young Miss Yuki?" Cyrus raised an eyebrow. "I hear that she's quite the looker. Not that I would know, of course. I haven't seen her in… Ooh, I'd say almost 14 years."

He smiled as Cyrus's expression changed to confusion. "Xian wasn't a member state of Calren until ten years ago… And I don't recall our parents ever sending any envoys there before then."

"Ha, yes, well," Eden gave him a look that showed he knew much more than Cyrus did about Xian and Kagami. "Our parents did, in fact, arrive in Xian around the same time you were born. Well, one of them did." He put his hands behind his back and began to walk forward. "Come, follow me. I have a small story to tell you."

The two of them began walking in the opposite direction of the campsite, down the way that the caravans had come in from. "At the time you were born, there was a falling out

between our mother and father. Something about the next in line for the throne, or some such- I didn't pay much attention to it. But it put our dear mother in a bit of a foul mood. So foul, that she decided to up and leave; for a southern village in the East. Xian, as you can probably guess. Anyway, when father heard that she had run off from Calren, he sent a squad of Adpets out after her, with orders to bring her back- unharmed of course. However, when they arrived in Xian, which I'll remind you was not a member state of the Calren empire but still an ally, they discovered that she was staying with the current lord in his mansion. Or, more specifically, his bed."

Cyrus looked at Eden with astonishment. "Oh, yes; it's true. Mother, for whatever reason, decided to elope with the lord-king of Xian, and, to everyone's collective surprise, was impregnated during her stay. Needless to say, father was none too pleased. And so, he decided that punishment was necessary; not for mother, though; he had time to cool his head and, as you may or may not remember, he was a sexist. He couldn't grasp the fact that mother had been mentally able to choose another man, even for a single night, over him. And so he blamed the lord of Xian. I don't recall his name, but I do know that he had effectively called down the rath of the gods by angering father, and his eyes were ripped out, his hands sawn off, and his title taken away. I believe father gave a speech to his council about it before he gave the order; 'his eyes shall be removed for having been laid on my wife,' etcetera, etcetera. You know how these things go, Cyrus. I gave a similar speech before I had him- and his council- assassinated. But I digress…"

They stopped when Xian was in clear view. The sun was beginning to set, tinting the sky and making even the burnt husk of Xian look beautiful in the coming twilight.

"…The child, despite being a bastard, was spared from father's vengeance. Even his cold heart couldn't kill a child; either that or he was satisfied with the father. It was a girl- with brunette hair, I hear- and she was sent right back to Xian after being born. Too young to remember any of it, and I doubt she was told of her past; probably still thinks that she's never left Xian in her life." He looked over at Cyrus. "Are you keeping up with me here, Cyrus? I hope this isn't too much for you to take in all at once."

Cyrus was speechless. "Does… Does that mean that…"

Eden nodded, his smile completely wiped away. "The girl's name was Kagami Yuki. She took her father's last name, and has been living with him her entire life." He turned and began to walk again.

"She's your sister."

Cyrus didn't move for several seconds after that, and Eden stopped and turned around. "Well, don't just stand there. Come on." Cyrus snapped out of his confused state and ran back up to Eden's side. "I haven't heard anything about what happened between you two before, during, or after the bandit's raid, and quite frankly, you could have had sex for all I care." Cyrus opened his mouth to object, but was stopped by Eden's hand gesture. "It's quite simply none of my concern." He chuckled. "I am much more open-minded and accepting than some may think, Cyrus. But that's not why I brought her up." Again, the two of them stopped, and Eden turned to Cyrus. "I want to know: how well did she handle herself in the fighting?"

Cyrus didn't say anything, unsure of the entire situation. "You mean… Against the bandits?"

Eden nodded. "Yes. How was her style; did she kill her fair share? Was she injured; did she hesitate; was she squeamish; did she use psynergy? I wish to know if she has become a capable fighter in her stay in Xian. If she hasn't, then this trip may have been a waste of time."

Cyrus snapped back into his mindset before he had arrived in the Calren campsite. "Wait, what do you mean? We came here to see if she could fight? How would that have been accomplished had the bandits not-"

He stopped himself. He didn't need the answer to this question. Eden would find out how well Kagami fought because knew that the bandits would be attacking that day. He knew that Cyrus would likely leave the caravan to head into Xian alone, and Richard likely told him after he did. And the more he thought about it, the closer he came to the realization that Eden didn't just *know* that the Forager bandits would be attacking; he had paid them to, and made sure that they'd be uninterrupted as Cyrus met up with and fought alongside Kagami against them. The bandits likely didn't know that Eden was expecting them to die in their raid, that they were just pawns in one of Eden's many games. But Eden didn't care about the bandits, nor did he care about the civilians of Xian that they had killed before being wiped out. He just wanted to see a possible new soldier in action. And he nearly wiped out a town to do it.

Eden smiled, as if reading Cyrus's thoughts. "That's right, Cyrus. The bandits were my doing. But they weren't just a test for Kagami; they were a test for you. Up until now, all your training has been either alone or one-on-one. But that isn't how life is. You are a Calren prince, and you will rarely be fighting alone. Just as well, you will rarely be fighting one-on-one. Ours are wars that shall be waged against armies, with either our own army to counter it, or just a

handful of Adepts to decimate it. You need the experience of fighting *with* an ally; not against one. And Kagami is the same age as you, and, if the results of that battle speak true, much of the same potential as you, as well. You will likely be fighting alongside her in the years to come, so it is good that you have been given a taste of how that fighting will be. But, of course, for any of that to happen, I need to know- truthfully- how she did. And I hope that you didn't do all the heavy lifting for her."

Cyrus sighed, and prepared to retell the battle that took place in Xian. And perhaps exaggerating on certain details, to ensure Eden's future favor of Kagami.

Part Four

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Isaac, Garet, Jenna, Felix, now joined by Mia, entered the northern entrance to Bilibin Cave. While the enclosed space and lit torches placed in the cave provided some support in fending off the outside cold, and while the blizzard that Mia had found, and saved, Cyrus from had died off completely, the party was still finding themselves shivering in the freezing air. Walking through the ice-lined cavern, Jenna, the only one who had thus far been able to sense the presence of Cyrus's shadow demons, kept a watchful and wary eye on their surroundings. Garet now had new reason to clutch his arms, trying to retain as much heat as he could, now without a battle's movement to keep his blood warm. Felix walked next to Isaac in the front, seemingly less bothered from the cold than the others in the group, with Mia perfectly not even inconvenienced while wearing her thick blue robes.

Isaac tightened his yellow scarf and tossed its end over his shoulder once more. "Mia, I'll never understand how you can deal with this kind of weather," he said looking back at her. "In Vale, if the breeze so much as picks up, we shut ourselves in and light up the fireplaces."

Mia gave a light laugh, feeling a bit better than she was atop the lighthouse. "Well… You get used to it, I guess."

"I can't see how." Garet added. "This cold is so bitter… I feel like my skin is going to freeze off." He looked over at Mia. "I'm thinking of looking into where to get one of those robes you've got there."

"Heh, actually I made this," Mia said. "It took me just under a month to make it look like it does now. I've been adding on things over time, though."

"I didn't know you sew, Mia," Isaac said in a friendly manner.

"Really? I never told you that?"

He shook his head. "No, it never really came up."

Mia started, "Well, that's-"

She stopped mid-sentence as she turned the around the corner. As each in the group followed suit, they stopped and looked in curiosity, and disgust, at the sight they only half-expected to see; the ghouls they had passed on their way to the Mercury lighthouse.

Mia, having not been with them to see it initially, was more puzzled than the rest of them. "Um, what is this?"

Felix answered, "When Cyrus came through here before us, it's likely that he fought a few of the ghouls in this cave. For

whatever reason, he didn't kill two of them and used Mars psynergy to attach their chains to this stalagmite." He raised his arm to block the sight and grunted in sickened disgust. "Now, it seems that one of them got hungry."

As the group got a closer look, they saw that one of the ghouls, sleeping, was cover in the blood of his fellow's, and that the other, dead, had several large cut and bite marks in various places across its body.

In multiple areas, you could see bone.

"That… That's…" Jenna was unable to form a sentence, too shocked from the horrid nature of the sight.

"I know…" Isaac said. "…Let's just get out of here…"

The group walked by the sleeping cannibal ghoul, sickened only more by the sound of its wretched snoring, its brother's blood still dripping from its fangs.

Part Five

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

Eden nodded in contentment. "Is that right?" he said, as Cyrus concluded his tale.

"Yes," the boy responded. "That is what happened."

"Hmm…" Eden thought for a moment. "If that's so… Then she could be of great use to us…"

"Do you want me to go find her?" Cyrus had almost completely given up on the lost cause of taking revenge on

Eden for him holding back the Calren soldiers. His anger had nearly blinded him at first, but after speaking with Eden, he realized that it was in his best interest to let his anger go. Despite his morals wanting him to strangle Eden until the last rotten breath left his throat, he never would. Because Eden was his brother. His older, stronger, and, ultimately, wiser brother. He didn't have it in him to truly lash out at him, no matter how many people he killed for the sake of testing him and gaining another person as a tool of destruction. And that saddened him greatly.

"Yes. Yes, you do that." Eden turned and slowly began to walk back around the hill's bend.

Cyrus slightly raised his voice, and added, "…Do you want me to tell her we're related?"

"That would likely be for the best." He lifted his and as a wave without turning around to look at him. "I'll be waiting at the campsite for the two of you. And feel free to take your time; we don't have to be back in Calren for another week or so."

Cyrus waited a moment, prepared to say something to Eden about the comment he just made, but decided against it at the last second. It wouldn't have been worth it.

He started off towards Xian, walking at a very slow pace, giving himself plenty of time to think about what he had been told. Had his father really been so cruel to the lord of Xian? The lord of Xian, who hadn't been switched out in over 20 years? That meant that the man his father punished all those years ago is still at Xian's throne, ruling over the rubble that Eden's hired bandits left in their wake. How would he react to knowing that Cyrus had, indirectly through Eden, been responsible? And was Kagami really his sister?

That was the news that stunned him more than anything, as just hours before he was told, he had intimately kissed her after the battle; a piece of information which he kept from Eden, but still felt like his older brother somehow knew. It was all so much to take in, and now he had to tell Kagami that she was about to be drafted into a family she likely didn't even know she had. He also didn't know how she would react to knowing she kissed her brother- nearly going beyond that, as well. His mind was filled with worst-case scenario situations, with Kagami rejecting him or even trying to kill him for what his father did to hers. Which reminded him that it was *very* unlikely she would even consider fighting for the throne of Calren when she obviously had such a hatred for it, even if she made an exception for him. He worried the entire way back to Xian, and felt his heart beating inside of him, for multiple reasons, when he saw her, still atop the cliff he left her on, now sitting at its edge with her knees in front of her chest, looking off into the star-filled night sky.

He stopped and sighed. 'This isn't going to go well,' he thought, as he started walking toward the stone stairs on the cliff's side again.

Looking down from the sky for a moment, Kagami saw Cyrus returning. She stood as he reached the top of the stairs. "You're back!" she turned to face entirely towards him as he approached.

"Yes…" For a moment he was avoiding eye contact. "And I think I have something to tell you…"

"In a moment," she interrupted. "My father wanted to meet with you."

Cyrus did not hide the surprise from his face in the least, but Kagami either didn't notice or didn't care as she grabbed his arm and urged him into the large mansion nearby.

When the doors opened, Cyrus felt almost in awe at the incredible sight; the exterior alone dwarfed native Calren design, but the interior would have driven architects insane should they have tried to top its magnificence. A foreign language was written in semi-abstract calligraphy, lining the top of the walls just under the point where they connected with the ceiling. As well, where the wall intercepted the floor a decorative lining about two feet tall seemed to cement the inward sides of the building together. It gave the main room a humble- yet wealthy- feel.

As Cyrus was taking the extravagance in, a door creaked open, and a man in a dark blue cloak covering his entire body stepped out. He walked with a noticeable limp and hunch, and held a decorated wooden cane in his right hand for balance. His left hand was hidden. He had a hood up, but a thin and growing brown beard was visible below his hidden-by-shadow eyes. He walked- or rather, hobbled- over to Cyrus and Kagami, stopping about ten feet away from them. He seemed out of breath from the short walk, and Cyrus wondered what had happened to him that such a man, whose body seemed at first glance to have been at one time physically fit, could be crippled so.

"Ah… You…" He slowly stood up straight, but did not look at him. "You must be… Cyrus…"

"…I am, sir." He replied respectfully. "And who might you be?"

"Me…?" The man coughed, then looked up at him trough the shadow inside the hood, revealing the fact that he had no

eyes. "I suppose that I'm your step-father."

Chapter 8: Chapter 7: Kolima

Trail Of The Age Walker – Chapter Seven

Part One

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Isaac and his allies entered the village of Kolima, its citizens going about their daily business as usual. No one seemed to notice that they'd arrived- not that it would matter if they did. They weren't going to stay for very long; only long enough to ask who had seen Cyrus and Kagami, and which way they went. Or even if they went this way at all. Isaac had seen the possibility that they instead may have opted to go back through Goma Cave, to cut across the bridge into Kalay and cut the trip in half. But instinct was guiding him. In his gut, he knew; for whatever reason, the two of them came this way, through Kolima.

Most likely.

He taps the shoulder of a labor-dressed citizen as he places a bundle of four wooden boards into the back of a horse-drawn wagon, and the man turns slowly, wiping the sweat from his forehead as he says, "Ah, welcome stranger. How can I help you?"

Isaac asks, "My friends and I are looking for someone- two someones, actually- who we think may have passed through here. Could you tell us if you saw anyone come through lately?"

He scratches the back of his head. "Hmm… No, sorry. I haven't seen anyone visitors other than yourselves. Have you checked the inn? If they just recently came through, they'd probably still be there."

Isaac shook his head. "For some reason, I have my doubts that the people we're looking for would stop at an inn. But thank you, anyway." He respectfully nods, and lets the man get back to his work.

Isaac turns to the rest of the group. "Well… Any ideas?"

"If they came through here, even in the dead of night, *someone* would have to have seen them," Felix says. "Unless they've changed their work routine, they still have men carry off lumber while there's moonlight. I'm sure if we ask around a bit more, we'll find out for sure."

"But if we don't move out soon, they'll get even further ahead of us," Isaac said, impatiently.

"Well, I'd rather not go after them in the wrong direction, if that's okay with you. And besides, talking about what we do next won't get us much closer to them." Felix looked over at a small group of men talking amongst themselves, likely taking a break from the day's labor. "We'll get this done faster if we split up. Isaac, how about you go ask those three over there. I'll check the inn, just to make sure. Garet, you check the shops- they may have bought some supplies while they were here and the locals outside just didn't notice them."

"What about me?" Jenna asked.

"You and Mia ask around the north side of town- Isaac, how about you get the rest of the south after talking to them, if they didn't see those two, alright?"

Isaac nodded, noticeably begrudgingly. "Alright."

Felix either wasn't paying attention to Isaac's tone or felt it would be quicker to just ignore it for now. He said, "Alright, then. As soon as any of you get any information, call for the rest of us. The quicker we find out which way they went, the quicker we can get this whole thing over with." With Felix's turning and walking towards the inn, the rest of the group split off, with the exception of Jenna, hesitating as the rest of the group went about the plan.

After seeing that Isaac was well out of earshot when in conversation with the three lumberjacks, she took a few steps forward, in the direction Mia was going. "Hey, Mia, wait up a second," she said, keeping her voice lower than normal.

Mia stopped and turned around. "Yes?"

"Mia, can I ask you something?"

The azure-haired girl looked slightly puzzled, but nodded regardless. "Well, of course. What's on your mind?"

Jenna was making regular glances in Isaac's direction when she asked, "Mia… Have you noticed anything… Different, about Isaac lately?"

Mia looked over at the blonde boy as he spoke with the three men, and watched as they each either shrugged or gave a small shake of the head. As Isaac nodded in thanks and turned to go question the rest of the southern half of the village, Mia answered, "Not specifically, no. Why?"

"Well, it's just that…" She sighed. "It's been gradual, but I've started to notice a change in his behavior."

"Such as?"

"Well, he's been getting angry quicker lately, and he's been acted irritated, too. And…" She turned towards Isaac. "Well, it's not really gradual anymore, either. It just seems to… Turn on and off." She looked at Mia again, and asked, "You haven't been noticing it?"

Mia thought for a moment. "…Well, I guess that he was acting differently just now then he used to. But it's a rather urgent situation, so I just figured it was how he normal impatience. I didn't realize he's been… Out-of-character more often than that." She saw Isaac talking to a young girl, and presumably getting the same answer. "Has anyone else been acting strange lately?"

Jenna shook her head. "Not that I've noticed. It just seems to be him, really."

"Well, didn't you all say that he was the first one attacked by those shadows that Cyrus controls? I'd probably be angry at them too."

"But Felix and I were attacked by the shadows, too, and we're just fine. And Isaac never got this way on our adventuring a year ago. He's never really been this way… Well, ever."

"Have you talked to anyone else about this?"

"No, I wasn't sure if it was just my imagination or not. But after the way he was after Felix kind of took the reins with the plan making… I'm sure of it. Something's up with Isaac."

Mia raised an eyebrow. "What do you mean about how he was when Felix was planning? I didn't notice anything."

"You didn't? I thought it was obvious…"

"Enlighten me."

"His tone of voice..." Jenna said. "You didn't notice how... How angry he sounded underneath it?" She looked at Isaac again, worriedly this time, as if expecting him to do something. "I mean, even if you ignore the attitude, I could practically feel the anger swelling up in him..."

She paused. Mia tapped her shoulder. "We can talk about this later. We need to get back to asking about the villagers."

Jenna nodded, and joined her as she asked around the rest of the town.

Part Two

---

8 Years before the Sealing of Alchemy;

"His... His step-fat'her?" Kagami asked in great confusion. "Did... Does that mean... But what..."

"Kagami, please..." Her father raised his hand, motioning for silence. Cyrus... Take a seat," the blind man said, rasping a cough. Kagami, still confused, pointed out to him a pair of chairs up against the wall. Sitting down in one, Cyrus watched as Kagami directed the man in blue robes to a chair just across from the one his was in. He gave out a great sigh when he sat down, and used the moments after to catch his breath as he put his staff to the side. Afterwards, Kagami came and sat down next to Cyrus.

He shifted in his seat.

The man spoke. "My goodness… If what I hear… About you is true… Then you must be… Quite… The extraordinary warrior…" He took short pauses between each of his words, getting together enough breath to say the next few. "…I've heard a bit about you… Cyrus… Other than… Your impressive combat prowess."

"You have?" Cyrus glanced at Kagami. "From whom?"

"Various persons… Under my command." If the man had eyes, he'd have been looking at the ground the entire conversation, his head hunched over. "They tell me… That you're the new heir… To the Calren throne…"

Kagami's eyes shot open, but she didn't say anything.

"And that your brother… Killed… The former king…" He paused a bit longer this time. "…Is that all true…?"

"It is, sir." Cyrus had no emotion in his voice to give away what he was thinking.

"If I'm not mistaken… The former king… Was your father…" His eyeless sockets looked up at him. "…Correct?"

"Yes."

"…I'm sure that you're wondering… What happened to my form…" His face fell down again.

"If you are who I think you are, then I'm fairly certain I already know."

"Do you…?" He cracked a small, toothy smile. "And who… Do you think I am?"

"The ruling Lord Yuki of Xian. The same Lord who interloped with my mother sixteen years ago, resulting in a child of brunette hair, pale complexion, and powers of Mercury psynergy."

"…That is correct." His heavy breaths were the only sound during a silence in the conversation. His smile was gone. "I wonder… Do you share the same… The same vengeance streak… That your father did…?"

"No. I do not."

"…That is good to hear…" He was smiling again. "Because I'd like to keep my right hand and mouth…" He 'looked' up at Cyrus again. "Those were the two things… That he said he's take… That he didn't… You know…"

"Did he say why?"

"No… Not really… He said it was… So I could spread word and show… What happens to traitors to the throne…" He coughed and looked at the floor again. "But lately… I've been thinking it's because… His knives were too slick with my blood… And dulled from my bone… To cut any more…"

Cyrus was silent.

"…But I do not hold grudges… If that is what… You're worried about… I didn't call you here… To exact my terrible revenge…"

"That's comforting."

"Indeed…" He coughed again. Cyrus could tell that his right hand was shaking every time he picked it up from his knee. "I suppose that you… Have a basic idea… Of just who Kagami… My daughter… Is then… Correct?"

Cyrus nodded, as if the man could tell. "Yes." He looked at her and their eyes met; hers shocked, his stoic. "I do."

Now Lord Yuki nodded. "She is your half-sister… Born from your mother's blood… And mine…" He took several deep breaths. "And I have a favor to ask of you…"

"…What is it?"

"I want… You to take Kagami… With you back to Calren…"

Kagami spoke up. "What!"

Lord Yuki didn't say anything.

"How can you say that? You want me to just… To just leave everything behind, and…" She looked at Cyrus.

Yuki raised his hand. "Kagami… You must understand… I am approaching… The last years of my life… And you will not be able to take my place… As the ruler of Xian…"

"What… What do you mean…"

"Cyrus… Is it not true… That Eden has come here… To annex Xian into Calren… Once and for all…?"

It wasn't, really. But Cyrus wasn't about to tell him that. And annexing Xian *was* on the list for when Eden and the rest of them came down here. It just wasn't the main reason. "… Yes." Cyrus said.

"Then those… Of the Yuki name… Will not live on as rulers… After I die…" He paused. "…Kagami… You will have no reason to stay here… Nothing to gain… Nothing to keep… With my death… It will mark the end of our dynasty… And

you will be better off… With the Calren family… To the North…"

"But… But I…"

Yuki shook his head. "It's the only way… For your life to continue… Even if you stay here… There will be nothing left for you… They will take it… And give nothing back…"

Cyrus frowned. What he was saying was, in a way, true. But that didn't change the fact that Cyrus found it ever so slightly on the offensive side.

"Perhaps if Cyrus here… Spoke a good word on your behalf… Then Eden may take you in… I'm sure that Cyrus has told Eden… Of your abilities…" He 'looked' at Cyrus with his face. "Correct?"

"Yes. And he is quite interested in her power's potential."

"I'm glad to hear that… Now… If you could make the arrangements…"

"Of course." Cyrus again nodded out of habit. "I've no doubt in my mind; Eden would gladly accept her amoung us." '*That was certainly easy,*' he thought.

Kagami's expression was of extreme disbelief. "But… Father… Why…"

"It is for the best, Kagami… The Calrens are not as evil as you imagine them to be…"

"It's not only that… But how can you say that? Look what they did to you!"

"This…" He motions at his entire body with his hand. "Was not the work… Of the entire Calren people…"

"Well, no but-!"

"The actions of one man… Do not define a nation…" He coughed; more horrid sounding than before. "…It would be better for you… If you agreed to go… With young Cyrus here… To Calren… You can start a new life… Be royalty of the highest order…"

"But father…" She pleaded. "I want my life here… I don't want to leave…" She turned to Cyrus, frantic. "Cyrus, if you think you could convince the king to take me in, then maybe you could let him make me the new ruler after my father!" She turned to Lord Yuki. "That's the only reason I have to leave, right? Because they're going to replace you? Well, if Cyrus can just convince Eden to-"

She stopped when her father began slowly shaking his head. "That wouldn't work… Even if you swore allegiance to the throne… After hearing about your power… There would be no way… That they would delegate you to an… Administrative duty." He sighed- or maybe it was a light cough, Cyrus couldn't be sure. "No… They'd rather use you… On the battlefield… There would be no reason… To keep you here…"

"I'll stay and command troops here then! They must realize attacks could come from the south!"

Again, Yuki shook his head. "No army would willingly trek across the Lamakan… Especially none from the West. The only threat to the Calren border… Is by the city of Calren itself… Through Goma."

"…And that is where they'd put me?" She looked at Cyrus.

He nodded. "That is… Most likely. You would be welcomed into our… Your family." He was suddenly uncomfortable.

Kagami was now quiet. She sat back down next to Cyrus. "… When."

Cyrus waited a few seconds for her father to answer, before realizing that she was asking him. "Well… I can't know for sure-"

"Stop. You clearly spoke to your brother about all of this already- taking me away." She didn't say anything, but Cyrus could see it in her eyes. Then in her thoughts; his Jupiter powers had a tendency to go astray of him from time to time. '*…I trusted you…*'

His level of comfortableness was lowered.

"So. When do we leave." It was barely a question. It was the voice and words of one resigned to an unwanted fate.

"…In one week. Or rather, within the week."

"…That soon."

"Yes. It is imperative to Eden's agenda that we are back in Calren by week's end."

"…" She stood. "…I'll get ready, then." She left Cyrus and her father, walking into the back room that Cyrus could assume was hers.

"…This is all… Very unfortunate…"

"You knew that I was sent back by Eden," Cyrus began, "to take Kagami with me."

Yuki nodded solemnly. "It was my guess…" He sighed, more clearly this time. It sounded stressed. "I regret that it has come to this… I only wish… We had more time…" His coughing fit returned. When it was over, Cyrus noticed drop of blood on his hand. He didn't say anything about it. "…It is best, though… For her to go with you." He paused. The silence tore at Cyrus. "…Be good to her. In Calren."

"I'll do my best to keep her safe."

"…Thank you."

A few moments later, Lord Yuki called for an aid. As the servant approached, Yuki said, "Cyrus… I want you to have something."

"Hmm?" The aid had in his hands an object of about three feet, covered in a thin, dark blue silk tarp, from the looks of it the thickness was less than that of paper. He presented it to Cyrus, bowing as he did. "What is… What is this?"

"From what I hear… Your aid was essential… In defending Xian… From the bandit's attack. I want you to take this… As a gift of my gratitude. On the behalf of all of Xian…" The aid unraveled the tarp, revealing a shining gold katana. "I present to you the jewel weapon… Of the Xian crown."

Cyrus was in awe. He could practically feel the power emanating off of the gold-lined blade. Its steel was curved in the traditional eastern fashion; its edge was visibly sharper than any sword Cyrus had ever seen made in Calren. It was a beautiful, wondrous weapon; as he ran his fingers over its hilt and handle, he could feel the intricate designs on it, forged out of solid gold. And his conscience was making it very hard for him to take it.

He was sent here to take this man's daughter. Even if he wasn't aware of that fact when he arrived, he was still going through with it after the order. The man may have said he knew that's what Cyrus was here for, but he had his doubts that he knew the whole story- it was unlikely that if he knew Eden sent the Forager bandits into Xian that he'd still be sending Kagami off with him. And now he was being given a gift for his brother's destroying of Xian. It didn't matter to him that he didn't give the order, or wasn't even involved in it occurring in the first place. He still felt responsible, knowing it was Eden. And being offered a gift for the destruction of a town by that town's leader put a sick feeling in his stomach.

But the aid insisted, keeping the sword held before him. "Please… Take it…" Lord Yuki seemed able to sense Cyrus' hesitance, though he may not have known the reason. Perhaps he thought it was humility, or a wish to not take from the man his father devastated. Whatever his thinking, he did not want Cyrus to leave his estate without taking the katana with him. "I insist…"

"…Very well." Cyrus took hold of its handle. Immediately, he felt a sudden surge of psynergy enter through where his hand made contact with the hilt. He recognized it; when he first received the longsword he was currently carrying on his back from Eden, he had the same experience. This katana was one of the subgroup of rare artifacts in Weyard; the Saigo-no. There are many weapons that are considered artifacts, ancient or not. But the Saigo-no are said to have existed since the creation of Weyard by the Gods, thousands of years ago. They are each infused with an incredible amount of psynergy- enough to kill a normal man, should it be released into him all at once. Only the strongest of Adepts, those said to have been chosen by the creators of the artifacts- or perhaps even the artifacts themselves- are

able to possess them, to use them in battle. Cyrus had never heard of someone being able to wield two of these weapons. The fact that he didn't recognize it as a Saigo-no meant that he may very well have been killed the instant he grasped it. The Xian Lord Yuki must have known that this was a Saigo-no. And there was no possible way that he could have known for sure if Cyrus would survive or not when he held it. But he didn't ponder that as he held the blade. Its power was flowing through him, becoming one with his blood, his veins, his soul. His mind clouded, as the combined strength of Eden's longsword and Yuki's katana filled his body. He was enticed.

Lord Yuki chuckled. "I was hoping… You'd survive…"

"No one ever told me…" Cyrus slowly became aware of his surroundings again. "…That there were any Saigo-no in Xian. I saw that Kagami's staff was one. But a single town holding two…"

"That silver staff… The Aratameru weapon… Was a gift to her… From your mother."

"What?" Cyrus completely snapped back to reality. "Where did my mother get…"

"I wouldn't be able to tell you… She likely hid it… From your father while he was king… To keep it from his greed… And lust for power…"

"…" Cyrus took another look at the sword in his hand. It was lighter than it looked, and he could swing it freely. The aid with the blue tarp left. Cyrus asked Lord Yuki, "How was your man able to keep hold of this blade? Its power… If not for my training it would have knocked me unconscious."

"That fabric he wrapped it in… Completely negates the effects… Of the psynergy radiating… From the Saigo-no artifacts. It was made, likely… Around the same time as the weapons themselves. Or perhaps by scholars… Of some later dynasty, yet unknown."

The two of them were silent. Cyrus didn't want to risk probing his mind with his still fresh Jupiter powers. But he wasn't content with guessing. It seemed that he wasn't the only one with hidden knowledge. He said, "…I can't take this."

"I want you to… As thanks…"

"But-"

"Besides… I think that your mother… Would have wanted you to have it, too…"

Cyrus didn't say anything else.

"…Its name… Is Gobudameshi. That sword you wield on your back… Its power is but a fraction of this katana's. There is not a foe on this earth… That can stand against Gobudameshi's strike… And survive."

Cyrus changed the subject. "…You can see me, can't you?"

Yuki chuckled. "The power of Jupiter… May be physically less than that of Mars, or of Venus… But its might comes from the mind… From the soul, from your will… Not from your body. Not from strength." His eyeless sockets looked up at him. They were filled with a purple glow. "My eyes may be gone… But I see with a new light… I see not what lies before me… I see the past… The present… The future… And you, Cyrus… Have quite a future ahead of you…"

"..."

"...Be careful, my boy... The challenges you face today... Are but a preparation... For the tests of will that you shall face... In future years..." He coughed violently. "...Keep Kagami... Safe... For us..."

He collapsed onto the ground. Cyrus jumped from his seat. "Ah!" He rushed to Yuki's side and cast the highest level of Cure he had- but Cure was only capable of healing physical wounds. Whatever was killing this man, it was not his injuries. "Someone!" he shouted, "Get out here!"

The aid rushed out at the noise, and gasped. He helped prop up the limp and nearly-lifeless body. "Help! Lord Yuki has collapsed! We need help!"

Kagami's door flew open, and she ran out into the room. "Father!" she cried. She latched her hands onto him. "What happened? Father, what-!" She looked around frantically. "Cyrus, what happened to him?"

"He collapsed! I don't know why!"

The next few minutes would change Kagami for the rest of her life. None of the healing psynergy that any of the survivors could use did any good. The herbs that grew nearby did nothing to even slow down Yuki's demise. The tears that fell from Kagami's face, landing on her father's body, did nothing to make it rise. Lord Yuki was destined to die that day, a victim not of Calren cruelty or disease, but of fate.

At the funeral, the clouds rained for the first time that week. Calren guards were surrounding the body as it was carried into the place it was to be buried: a green field graveyard just north of Xian, free from trees and roads- free from

attention. It was where all the members of the Yuki dynasty were traditionally buried, and Kagami's father was being placed in the newly dug grave at the cemetery's head.

Cyrus stood next to her as the rain hit them, hiding her silent tears and freezing over her very feelings in an icy layer of water. The guards had been sent by Eden after news of the death reached him; Cyrus doubted his brother saw the Lord's death coming, but if when he returned to camp he found Eden saying it was 'all according to plan,' he wouldn't be surprised. But he wasn't worried about Eden. He wasn't worried about the future of the leaderless Xian. He was there to comfort Kagami as her father was buried in the dirt of his homeland. Though he wasn't truly related to the man, Cyrus still felt the twinge in his heart when he thought about Yuki's death. He could only imagine what Kagami was feeling- even his own parent's deaths didn't hit him hard enough to make him cry for hours at a time.

But he was there to comfort her. His dear, new sister. And in keeping his promise, he would always be there for her. By her side. Nothing would change that.

Nothing.

Part Three

1,218 Years after the Sealing of Alchemy;

Jenna politely thanked the women shaking her head in response to her questions, and took a few steps toward Mia. "Well," she started, "I think that was the last person we had to ask. Unless the others got lucky, we may have taken a wrong turn."

Mia opened her mouth to say something, but Garet came rushing past. "Mia, Jenna! Felix found someone, let's go!"

"What?"

Garet stopped after rushing past them and turned around. "Felix found someone who said those two came through here and were heading east. Felix is getting Isaac; he told me to get you. We're going to meet him by the Kolima Bridge, now come on!"

Jenna and Mia nodded at each other, and joined Garet in running to the drawbridge that led across the river dividing Angara into north and south. They were finally on the right trail. And hopefully, soon, they'd be able to end all of this, and go home.